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The "Latchkey" Family

coping with the mismatch in work/school schedules

by

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Alison Griffith and Caralee Price

December 1989

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THE "LATCHKEY" FAMILY: COPING WITH THE MISMATCH IN WORK/SCHOOL SCHEDULES[1]

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past sixty years or so, a home-school work organization has been developed which presupposes a family in which the mother works inside the home (Dehli, 1986). The school's part in this division of labour was predicated on the availability of women in the home to assume aspects of the overall educational and socializing work; among them managing the child's relation to school routines and monitoring the child's school presence. The majority of married women with children in school were available throughout the day to prepare children for school in the morning, give them lunch, supervise their after school activities, monitor bedtimes, supplement the school program with reading and related activities, monitor homework, enforce school deadlines, and in other ways support the work of the school (see Griffith and Smith, 1990a and 1990b). In this context, the working mother or the "single parent" were (and in some instances still are) viewed as a problem for the child's schooling (Griffith, 1984).

In our contemporary society, the traditional family organization can no longer be presupposed (Eichler, 1983; Livingstone, 1985). As children reach school age, women who have previously worked full-time in the home begin to consider the possibilities of full or part time employment. In the Canadian labour force, there are 2,657,795 women with children at home and 1,760,805 of those women have children 6 years and over (Statistics Canada, 1989). 69% of Ontario women with children of school age are in the labour force (Neufeldt et al, 1984:8). Women's participation in the labour market across Canada increases dramatically as their children enter the school system.[2]

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2. In Ontario, there are 1,156,995 children enrolled in the elementary grades of the public and separate school systems.

METHODOLOGY

Research for the project The "Latchkey" Family: Coordinating the Family-School Relation was undertaken between October 1988 and June 1989. The "latchkey" phenomenon is a colloquial term for a situation in which the paid employment of both parents competes with the educational enterprise for the time, energy and thought of parents. The investigators carried out a study of 18 families where both parents or the single parent were in paid employment in order to investigate the intersecting work processes presupposed in the category "latchkey child". We considered schools and families with children in school as engaged in the shared work of rearing and educating the child. We also examined the actual work practices which link the family and the school by focussing on the kinds of strategies used by family members to manage the uncoordinated schedules of the school and the labour market.

Interviews were carried out with agencies and organizations in Toronto and Oshawa who provided current information relevant to our area of study.[3] We had previously established a cooperative relationship with the Board of Education and the staff of two schools in Oshawa and that cooperation continued through into this project. We speculated that the apparent socio-economic differences in these two schools might reveal differing methods of coping with work and school schedules.

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3. From the printed material gathered and the interviews, we were able to sketch a "map" of the daycare system in Oshawa, including community organizations that offered care before and after school, that might help families meet the gaps between work and school schedules. Additional socio-economic data pertaining to the school areas under study was compiled from a number of statistical sources. This provides comparative information in analyzing the influence of varying factors on the ability to successfully coordinate work, home and school schedules.

The choice of families and schools should not be seen as constituting a research "sample". Rather, the selection of families and schools was made anthropologically where the family-household is embedded in its social and economic organization and related to the context in which it functions. The focus of the research was not on the individual child, her or his behaviour and patterns of learning or social behaviour in school. Rather, the concern was with the family -- the "latchkey" phenomenon placed within families where the work hours of both parents do not "match" the work hours of the child in school. The families were not identified by us to the schools, nor was any of the substance of the interviews communicated to the school.

CONTEXT

The city of Oshawa (population approximately 124,000) is located in southwestern Ontario. It is part of the Regional Municipality of Durham and contains 39% of the region's population and is its economic centre.

The most significant event in Oshawa's history was the relocation of the Mclaughlin Carriage Company in 1876. This company was the forerunner of General Motors of Canada, Ltd and the company's Canadian headquarters is located in Oshawa. General Motors is the city's principal employer and taxpayer. In addition to the automobile manufacturing industry, other major businesses include primary metals, metal fabricating, printing and publishing, the retail trade and rubber and plastics manufacturing. There is a broad range and mix of housing in the city, including older homes in the city core, apartments and newer single family housing. (Oshawa Data Journal, 1987; History of the City of Oshawa, 1983)

CHILD CARE FOR SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

At the time of the research, Durham Region Department of Social Services provided day care facilities for 81 children in Oshawa and there were about 30 privately operated day care centres and nursery schools located in the city.

Two types of programs for school-aged children are in existence. One program is the responsibility of the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the Durham Board of Education and is based in already existing school space. The other operates in new school space and is a joint initiative of MCSS, the Board and the Ministry of Education (MOE). Both are operated by non-profit groups through the Board. There are only two new-school programs operating in Durham region, both outside the City of Oshawa. All programs for school age children in existing schools in the City of Oshawa (there are three) are operated by the YWCA. These "First Base" programs provide spaces for 40-50 children in a before and after school program. Two of the centres (Rossland and Stevenson) are close to each other in established, low density neighbourhoods that are largely middle class in nature. The third is in South Oshawa in a low-income, high density neighbourhood that includes government subsidized housing and a number of single parent families. Most of the children who use the "First Base" programs are aged 6-9 years. Finally, one source of back-up support for children in the Oshawa area should be mentioned although none of the parents or children interviewed ever alluded to it. Kidsline is operated by the Durham Region Distress Centre. It provides 24 hour, 7 day service and is staffed by 65 trained volunteers who respond to calls from children 14 and under. Many calls are from children who are alone and bored and volunteers suggest activities to entertain them.

The two schools included in our study do not have before or after school care for school-age children although lunch-time supervision is provided for children attending the school who do not go home for lunch.

FINDINGS

Two themes emerge from the interviews:

1) Mismatches between school and work schedules force all working parents to devise a variety of ways to provide for their children's supervision.

2) Families in both school areas find it difficult to organize the differing demands and schedules of school and work. However, the resources available to families in the two school areas are very different. Thus, families with fewer educational, employment and economic resources are often more stretched to manage the conflicting demands of school and work than are those with more resources.

In the following discussion of our findings, we have distinguished between the two neighbourhoods -- the two schools and the families who live in those neighbourhoods. We have given the families pseudonyms and renamed the schools. The school in the lower income, older neighbourhood of the city we will call Lake School. The school in the middle income neighbourhood, we will call Hill School.

Data has been analysed comparing the two school groups. As expected, most of the Hill School parents tend to be "middle-class" in terms of occupation, education and income; Lake School parents, are more appropriately described as "working-class". These designations will become clearer as we discuss field data for both areas.

The 1986 census tracts for these two Oshawa areas tend to support our findings for the 18 families. In the Hill School area, the study population is concentrated in one census area and it is divided into two groups, one middle-class, the other working-class in nature. In the Lake School area the study population is spread over four census areas, three of which are very similar and mostly working-class in nature. The fourth area seems to be somewhat more affluent in terms of socio-economic background. For the purposes of comparison we have selected one of the other, more representative areas. Percentages are based on total population 15 years of age and over (Statistics Canada,1989):

1. Education -- In the Hill School area, 34.1% do not hold a secondary certificate, 22.9% have a trades certificate or other non-university education and 28.7% have a university education. In the Lake School area, 56.4% are in the first category, 24.8% in the second, and 6.9% in the third.

2. Occupation -- In the Hill School Area, 10.2% of males and 8.9% of females hold administrative,teaching and health related occupations; 15.4% of males and 15.8% of females have technological, social, clerical, sales and service occupations; 11.9% of males and 3.2% of females hold industrial type occupations. In the Lake School area, 3.6% of males and 3.3% of females hold the first type of occupation, 10.3% of males and 16% of females the second type, and 34% of males and 2.2% of females the third type.

3. Participation in labour force -- In the Hill School area, 76.7% of males and 57.3% of females are employed. In the Lake School area, 76% of males and 44.1% of females are employed.

4. Income -- In the Hill School area, the average income for males is $38,578 and $14,800 for females. In the Lake School area, the average income for males is $20,907 and $11,108 for females. For families, the average income is $64,397 and $32,658 respectively.

It is noteworthy that differences in income and occupation in both areas are more significant for males than for females. This finding does not hold true in our sample where the gap is similar for both sexes, given the high representation of female teachers in the Hill School area.

COMPARING SCHOOL FAMILIES
EDUCATION AND INCOME.
HILL SCHOOL FAMILIES.

The parents we interviewed range in age from mid-thirties to the early forties. Most families have two children of elementary school age, 6 to 12 years-old. Two families have three children; three families have high-school or pre-school aged children.

Most families are two parent nuclear families. In two cases, one or two members of the extended family live nearby -- grand-parents in one instance, an aunt (mother's sister) in the other case. One household has both a resident grand-parent (father's father) and an aunt living within walking distance (mother's sister); and one single-parent household with a mother and daughter. One family has immigrated from the Ukraine and the other from Jamaica. One household is of German origin and one of English origin. In most cases the home language is English. In one family, the grandfather lives with the family and speaks only Ukrainian.

As far as formal education is concerned, many parents in the Hill School households have a college education. In three of the families, one or both of the spouses hold a bachelor's degree. Four individuals have high-school education. The single mother in our sample has the highest level of formal education, a master's degree.

Of those with university degrees, most are teachers (an unintended result of the selection process). The salaries of parents with this level of

education and working full time are in the $45,000 to $50,000 (plus) range. None of the fathers in the Hill School neighbourhood earn less than $35,000. Most mothers earn considerably less than the fathers in the study group, that is, in the $15,000 to the $35,000 ranges. One of the teachers works half-time, putting her in the lowest income bracket.

As we learned, teachers are the only women workers in our study population who regularly take courses in order to upgrade their professional standing, although this requires additional effort on the couple's part in terms day-care strategies.

LAKE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

Most parents are in their early thirties to early or mid-forties and have two children. Two families have three children. Two families have pre-school aged children and three others have teen-aged children. Only one family has extended family members living in the same household. Two others have an aunt (mother's sister) and/or grand-parent living within walking distance. There is only one immigrant family in this group. In all cases the home language is English.

Unlike Hill School, the educational level of the families in the Lake School area is quite uniform. Nearly all husbands and wives have completed either grade 10, 11 or 12. In two cases the fathers have additional vocational or technical training.

Four of the fathers in the families we interviewed in the Lake School area earn a salary between $25,000 and $35,000 in the retail sector; in automotive manufacturing, and as industrial workers. Two fathers earn $35,000 to $50,000 (plus) and both put in a great deal of overtime. One earns between $15,000 to $25,000 in an automotive business in a neighbouring town.

Most mothers earn between $15,000 and $25,000 as office workers or sales managers. One works in a family business. Three mothers work part time and earn between $5,000 to $15,000 in the health care sector and in the service sector.

WORK SCHEDULES
HILL SCHOOL FAMILIES.

Many parents in this study area work in occupations which require that employees follow the 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. or 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. pattern -- office work in government and industry, teaching jobs.

In about half the cases the fathers work long hours, especially those in managerial positions. They are not usually home when the children leave for school or arrive home. A strategy used by one family to have some time together is to have breakfast together instead of the traditional evening meal.

> Interviewer: So your husband is not home for dinner during the week as a rule.
> Mother: No.
> Interviewer: So you would have dinner...
> Mother: He's home Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It's different but I'm so used to it because he has been in sales as long as we've been married.... That's why we always have, have eggs or hot cereal or something for breakfast - that's our time for the day, you know, some days. We still, I mean they eat cold cereal and that kind of stuff too.... We sit down together for breakfast.

Shift work and a 7/7:30 A.M. to 3:00/3:30 P.M. schedule are often indicative of work in industry, but not always blue-collar work. Mr. Schiller is a builder. He starts at 7 A.M. but does more than a eight hour day and his hours vary from one day to the next. Another father, Mr. Mason, works for a large automotive manufacturer. He has flexible shifts, working either from 7

A.M. to 3 P.M. or from 5:30 P.M. to 2 A.M. His flexible hours allow him the flexibility to participate in morning, lunch or after school routines. He can choose his shifts according to need. It also facilitates the division of housework tasks between himself and his wife.

> Mother: And we're lucky. One of the fortunate things is when he's on two weeks of nights, all the errands that I hate he does because he doesn't have anything else to do in the day; he's got the afternoon free. So, although I manage all the things when it comes to picking up the birthday cards and getting the present or enrolling the kids in things or picking up the shoes, he's able to do all the errand type things. So I...our toughest weeks are when he's on days and we're both out of the home during the day and no one has been able to do much.

The Grahams are high-school teachers and have made formal job-sharing arrangements with their colleagues at work. Given the age of their daughters (6 and 3) and their commitment to coaching sports after school hours, they are concerned about the time when both children will be full-time pupils.

> Mother: Now, I don't know what it's going to be like when we get both kids in school and both parents working. After school is a constant problem because I have to find out his coaching schedule and then I work my coaching schedule around it. And then we try to figure out who's picking up the children; who's going to be there for them when they come home if they're coming home; or is he dumping them off on me so that I can continue my practice with the children. That's just a non-stop ... are we going to get a babysitter to come in, and drop them here because we'd have to go to another school to coach.
> Father: [Wife] and I have both worked for principals who've told us, you know, that she should be home with the children. Now these are WELL meaning people.
> Interviewer: They never say you should be home with the children?
> Father: No, and in fact, one in particular amazed that I was even considering ... I'm the first MALE in our school who would have taken my job-share. And I know that next year, we now have three males who will be job-sharing next year ...

The mothers we interviewed in the Hill School area tended to be well paid. Those who are teachers find that their schedules are somewhat in conflict with the children's school hours (except for the various holidays)

because they must arrive in school earlier and leave later than the children. As the Grahams so aptly put it, a teacher's job demands commitment. The community college teacher also must leave home on some days much earlier than her daughter. Only Mrs. Smith who teaches half time is able to avoid the strains of conflicting work schedules.

The other mothers (those who are not teachers) all work from 8 A.M. to 4/4:30 P.M. The office worker, Mrs. Basset, has a certain leeway in her schedule in that she can start as early as she wants but this has not helped totally avoid the scheduling mismatch in her household. To cover the gaps she relies on extended family members.

> Interviewer: So you have to be at work at eight o'clock, so you are leaving at what time?
> Mother: Hopefully by seven thirty. Hopefully. I'm on flex hours so if I'm a few minutes late it doesn't really matter.
> Interviewer: Okay, so how and what time does your husband leave for work?
> Mother: He leaves roughly the same time I do. My dad is still home until about 10 o'clock so he's here. But before he came to live with us, [the children] were basically on their own in the mornings.

LAKE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

Four of the Lake School fathers work on a similar schedule; from 7/7:30 A.M. to 3/3:30 P.M. Of the other fathers, Mr. Holloway sometimes works the evening shift from 6 P.M. to 2:30 A.M.; Mr. Kinsey works the evening shift in the printing business; and the store clerk, Mr. Harrison works 9:30 A.M. to 6:30 P.M. These fathers are not home when the children leave for school but are there when they return, unless they work overtime.

The mothers' hours vary from 7:00, 8:00 or 9:00 A.M. to 4:00, 4:30 or 5:00 P.M.. Mrs. Calensky works nine-hour days in a family business, a situation which causes great disarray in her family life.

> Mother: I work for my cousin. He has his own company. And it was two years ago we were on holidays and he was short some workers. So we were on holidays and he called me and wanted someone to come and help out. That's the way it started and then I got on full time with him. I didn't like the hours. Didn't like working from seven in the morning 'til four thirty. I figure seven to three thirty would have been all right.

Mrs. Miner works as a health care aid from 7 A.M. to 3 P.M. three days a week and alternate Saturdays. Mrs. Holt is a cook and also works shifts varying in length. A third mother works at a dry-cleaner's from 8 A.M. to 3:00/3:30 P.M. as well as two evenings in the local bingo hall.

Only two families are able to avoid the mismatch between work and school schedules. One, because mother's and father's work schedules do not coincide; the other, because the mother works less than 40 hours per week and she has an informal job-sharing situation at work.

> Mother: Or a lot of times, if I knew I was going to be off a day, I would call S---- [name of co-worker] that night and say, "Look I can't come in today, my [child] is sick. Or she's got measles." -- which has happened. "Would you work for me?" "No problem." As long as one of us appeared, he didn't really get too bothered by us. Because we've both worked for him. But S-----'s like me, she has a young one and she doesn't want to work full-time. So we pretty well trade back and forth.'

MOTHER'S WORK

Given the considerable mismatch between the school and work schedules of families and the fact that women have the main responsibility for housework and child care, women participants were asked how they reconciled the demands of the market place with those of family life.

HILL SCHOOL FAMILIES.

Some mothers commented favourably on the compatibility between family life and their profession or occupation. Mason and Ealing, both teachers,

think that teaching and motherhood go well together. Mason can select the days when she is on lunch duty at school to coincide with those days when her husband works the evening shift and is home during the day so that the children can always come home for lunch. Mrs. Ealing described the ways that home and school fit together.

> Interviewer: Do you think your job fits well with being a working mother?
> Mother: It does. It does because we don't HAVE to be at the college when we're not teaching providing we make arrangements for students that need to see us or we need to see. [There are times] at the hospital, though, I'm not available. She could reach me by phone, but I can't really leave. At the college I could leave.
> Interviewer: How about parent's night. You can get time off ... you can organize going to parent's interviews at the school without too much problem? Because of your job.
> Parent: Yes. Like yesterday morning at 9:00, we had a parents/teacher meeting. And I could go. I didn't have a class until 11:00 and this was at 9:30. I went to the college and worked for about an hour and did a few things and then I went and then went back up about 10:30.

Mrs. Gifford's employer places no obstacles on her attending teacher-parent interviews, staying home because of children's illness, or taking phone calls at work.

> Interviewer: I was just wondering whether... how convenient it is and can you get calls. They don't mind you being called to the phone or they don't mind you making phone calls?
> Mother: Actually, they're pretty lenient that way because they're - most of the people working there are working moms... Well I find too that they're pretty good with me because I go beyond what I have to do too. Yeah, they've been pretty good even in the summer time when they were at Sport's Camp. One of the boys had, I think it was a little too much heat -- you remember how hot it was last summer -- and he was feeling sick to his stomach and I just had to go up and say, "I'm sorry, one of the kids is sick" and they'll say, "We'll see you tomorrow."

Mrs. Basset has no problem leaving the office to pick up the children in case of need because she has banked extra hours.

Interviewer: How about Parent Interview days at the school? How difficult is it for you to do those interviews? Do they schedule them at a time when you can go?
Mother: I would say that ninety-nine percent of the time considering that I'm on Flex [time] that you know if they say 4:30 I can leave the extra 10 or 15 minutes to get there so there's not much problem.

It is apparent that some mothers have made career changes to accommodate for the birth of their children. Mrs. Smith worked full-time in a day-care centre but then became a nursery school teacher.

Mother: I worked five years in day care. Then I had my own and then by the time [child] was two, I had a job working three mornings at a nursery school and it worked out so well. If it hadn't worked out so well, I wouldn't have done it. They did not charge me for having my kids [there] and I took them with me for three years to school. It worked out so and it felt...it was just nice ...

Mrs. Ealing adopted an older child and took a school term off to spend time with her daughter. Mrs. Banks took a year off as maternity leave. Mrs. Schiller made the most radical change of all. Having worked as a teacher for 7 years, she stayed home for 11 years because of her family.

Mother: And then I went to supply teaching because what I was doing before -- I used to work in the evenings because the kids didn't need me in the evenings -- but I was there in the daytime. But slowly things started changing as they got older and it was more that they needed me at night but were gone at school all day. So I thought, "Gee". So I went back to supply teaching to see if I would like to go back to teaching. I enjoyed it so I applied and got back in last year.

Some of the Hill School mothers we interviewed noted that they were working for reasons other than economics. Mrs. Gifford offered an interesting reason for deciding to stay on the job market.

Interviewer: Do you see yourself doing the same kind of thing in the future or...?
Mother: Until I decide that I've had enough of working, you know, like it's not a desperate necessity that I have to work. It helps in order

for us to get all the things that we like and give our kids what we think they deserve, you know. And to just, you know my husband is a real worker and in order for us to enjoy our time off, like we try and get, you know, holidays away and this sort of thing together...

LAKE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

In the Lake School area, the principal reported a high percentage of women working in the home. When the school calls home, the staff always finds "someone" home. However, many mothers in the Lake School area do work outside the home. The census tract statistics for the school's catchment area show some of the lowest as well as the highest rates of labour force participation for females in Oshawa (and Ontario) -- from less than 50% in two of the census areas to 58.8% to 61.6% in the other two areas (versus 58.8% in Oshawa and 57.3% in the Hill School area). Unlike the Hill School mothers, economic necessity was a major factor in the decision to work.

Most of the mothers did not see their jobs as compatible with their family life. Mrs. Holt was the exception. She pointed to the informal job-sharing arrangement, her understanding employer and her short work hours and relative flexibility, having the summer off and the close proximity or work to home. But even in her case, the built-in "compatibility" of her job is based on quantitative rather than qualitative factors; a combination of the work hours available and her family resources.

Mother: Because it's just Monday through Friday. There's no weekend work involved; there's no nights involved. And, you know .... Like in the summer months or in the warmer months actually, I'm normally home by 3:00 -- the hours vary. Like if you get 40 hours in dry cleaning, you're lucky. If you get 25 that's a good week. I like it that way because I don't have Saturdays to work and I don't have evenings to work and, then, [Father] is usually off one day a week and the kids are home with him because he works Saturdays.
Father: Dry cleaning drops off in the summer
Mother: Like if I get fifteen or twenty hours a week in the summer, forget it, it's not worth my time to get up and get two kids dressed and

> across the road to pay her the same amount whether I get my hours in or not because the kids are still there four or five days a week and she still gets paid, right? I mean she's expecting her money like anybody else.

Other mothers, as well, valued the short travelling distance between home and work.

> Mother: I basically chose it because it was in the office field that I wanted. And it was close to home. I was used to working in Toronto.

Mrs. Kinsey has the reverse problem. She values her job for the benefits that it offers but has a serious problem with distance between home and work. The family moved to Oshawa recently, but she is still working at the same job she had before they moved. She is considering looking for another job closer to home -- a move which entails the risk of losing some of the considerable advantages she has in her present job as a manager in a retail store.

> Mother: But I have thought about changing jobs just for the simple fact that I feel drained all the time. 'Cause by the time you get home and make supper -- [Son] has got homework I have to check that. And you know, it's a long day.

Some project participants in the Lake School area pointed out the relative inflexibility of their jobs in terms of school demands or emergencies. Mrs. Holt cannot easily leave work if the school calls for an emergency. On the other hand she does have some flexibility in selecting a shift if she is informed well in advance by the school of upcoming events like PD days.

> Mother: PD days, I ask to go at night. And that's what I've been doing. So he's home and then all three of us are home.
> Interviewer: Are they reasonable about requests like that from you where you work? I mean if you try to arrange your schedule, can you do that pretty well?

> Mother: I know when the PD or whatever -- when they are coming up. And so I just ask. And that way it's easier for all of us. [But otherwise] I couldn't leave whenever I want. It's not like, you know, you're sitting in an office with a bunch of people while you're doing your own work. Fine! Like I'm a cook where I am. I can't just say, "Well, I've got to go". I can't. I have to say, "Can you phone somebody in to cover me because I ... Unless the boss is there and he'll say, "Well, geez. If you've got to go, you'd better go".

Mrs. Bardot, on the other hand, works in an office and can leave to pick up her child and make other arrangements; she makes up the time later.

> Mother: There's a phone right on my desk. So they [school] phoned me over [daughter] being a bit sick. So I picked her up and took her to my Mom's.
> Interviewer: So you can leave work and get her and take her to your Mom's and then go back to work and no one is difficult, causes you difficulty.
> Mother: No. I'm sure if maybe it kept up or something, maybe they would say something. I usually make up the time.

Mrs. Miner has no privacy if she needs to talk to her children. Her work as a health care aide locks her in to an awkward and inflexible schedule. This causes her family considerable difficulty as well as emotional strain.

> Mother: Well, our day here has to start very early, of course, because I start work at 7:00 Now I have to say, too, that I only work part-time -- I don't work full-time, I only work part-time. But being a nurse, you're on call, so "part-time" is sometimes full-time. It depends on the need. [chuckles] (...) Every other weekend, I still have to work. So the responsibility of the day off just falls on Daddy. That weekend I have to work Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday. I work a four day stretch in there. But then when that's over, I'm off for four days. (....)
> Interviewer: Is it easy for the school to get in touch with you?
> Mother: Where I work there's no place private to talk on the telephone. I'm standing at a nurses' station with nurses and doctors and everybody else ... Listening while I'm trying to talk. It's not a very private situation.

Many of the Lake School mothers said they interrupted their work life to have children. The interruptions ranged from one and a half years to 7 years.

MOBILITY

In our research group, four families had moved or were thinking of moving to a new area, two from the Lake School area and two from the Hill School neighbourhood. These moves can cause acute problems for the families in terms of both occupation and childcare. For example, shortly after one family moved into town, the mother's sister, on whom she had relied for child care after school hours, moved away from the area.

Families may move in order to be closer to the child's school although that can cause other problems with the distance between work and home and babysitting services.

> Mother: But now we want to get out of here because it's not really that residential any more. It's getting too commercial.
> Interviewer: So you would rather be in a strictly residential ...
> Mother: Yeah, more kids for [son] to play with. And his school is closer -- 'cause that is a WALK for him down there to Lake School. I'll have to find a another babysitter probably because, you know, taking her [daughter] up to the bus. Plus I don't drive...
> Interviewer: Is that where you'll look for one?
> Mother: In that area so I could walk to the babysitter. If not, then I can always still go over here. Like that's not the worst problem. If I HAVE to, I have to take a bus and bring them both with me and drop them off and ... you know. It will take me an hour to get home and an hour to get back.

SUMMARY: COMPARING SCHOOL FAMILIES.

If one compares the two school populations in terms of family composition, education, income, occupation and mobility, the following observations can be made:

1. The age of the parents and the number of children per family is similar in both school areas. There are more teen-agers in the Lake School group which indicate that, in some cases, parents started their families

earlier. The number of nuclear and extended families is similar for both areas.

2. As far as education, income and occupation are concerned, the two populations are very different. The families in the Lake School area have significantly fewer resources than those in the Hill School district. Income and education are lower in Lake School families than Hill School families. Hill School families have more flexible schedules as well as more material resources. The parents' access to employment is narrower in the Lake School families.

3. The socio-economic standing of the participants is reflected in the work schedules of the project participants. Shift work and early starting hours tended to reflect blue-collar work -- a feature of the Lake School families working lives.

4. In almost all cases, there is a basic incompatibility between school and work hours unless husbands and wives work different schedules, for example, where one of them does shift work, or if one of the spouses works part-time or job-shares. Some husbands work extra long hours.

5. Women from both areas did not choose their careers with an eye to the demands of motherhood and most had interrupted their work to have a family. More women in white-collar occupations, particularly in large firms, have some flexibility with their hours. This flexibility enables them to better accommodate the needs of their school-aged children. Some women have been able to work less than full-time and to be off work for part of the year. They chose to be under-employed as a way of eliminating the gaps between work and school schedules as well as reducing the double work load.

FAMILY STRATEGIES FOR CHILD CARE

The reality for parents employed outside the home is that children must be left at home unsupervised for varying periods of time.[4] The family interviews reflect that reality. In general, the parents agonized over such situations, particularly in the case of pre-teens, even when the children proved themselves to be extremely independent. The parents told us of strategies such as insuring that a neighbour keeps an eye on the child or calling home at regular intervals. They also dictated rules of behaviour to ensure maximum security. In this section we will attempt to describe and analyse the circumstances under which children are left without adult supervision, the strategies used by parents to avoid or minimize the occurrence of such situations. These strategies cover morning, after school, lunch time periods on a daily basis; Professional Development days (P.D.) or Professional Activity days (P.A.), Spring and Christmas holidays, and summer vacations. Because there are social class differences between the two groups interviewed, their situations will continue to be analysed separately.

MORNING AND AFTER SCHOOL SCHEDULING STRATEGIES
HILL SCHOOL FAMILIES.

In the Hill School group we found three situations where the children stay alone at home in the morning for varying periods of time. In one case the child is 12 years old and stays alone some mornings for one and a half hours when her mother must teach an early class. In two other families, two boys aged 8 and 11 and a third boy also 11, stay alone for 15-30 minutes while

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4. Under the old Child Welfare Act, the age at which at child could be left alone at home was 10 years of age. The new legislation in effect since 1984, "The Child and Family Services Act", does not spell out an age limit. Each situation is considered individually.

the mother keeps in touch by phone. None of the children responsible for a sibling or left on their own are less than 11 years old.

At the Smiths', the 11 year old son chooses to stay alone rather than go to his sister's babysitter. The sitter's daughter walks the Banks' daughter to school. This family previously employed a full-time nanny until the children were old enough to go to school; a costly solution not used by other families in this study population.

> Mother: The kids usually get up about 6:45, 7 or so and then they dress, wash, you know have something to eat and then my daughter goes to the baby sitter's which is just a couple of houses from here. My son stays here. Because of the closeness of the baby sitter's and the closeness of the school, he chooses not to go to a baby sitter anymore. And then he leaves the house about 8:10. He likes to be at school early and the girl leaves the baby sitter's about 8:30. It's about a ten minute walk to school. Then they spend their day at school. Our boy comes home at lunch. His sister goes to the baby sitter's at lunch and has her lunch or it depends if there are activities going on at school, they stay at lunch. And then I usually give him a call or he'll give me a call at work to see how things are going, anything interesting going on. When the school day is over, the girl goes back to the baby sitter's until I come home which is anywhere from 4:15 to 4:45, and then I usually check in with our son or he checks in with me. He often goes to a friend's house to play but he'll always call me to tell me if he's gone to a friend's house.

The Giffords rely on pre-school activities and on the presence of construction workers who have been renovating their house, to help reduce the amount of time the boys stay by themselves. Previous to having their three children in elementary and nursery school, they used, like most parents, the services of a teenaged sitter, of a grand-mother and a neighbour.[5]

> Mother: I leave here around ten to eight. I have to be at work for eight o'clock. I drop her off at the nursery school which is just up at the corner. The boys are here for anywhere from half and hour to...from

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5. It was not uncommon for parents to tell the interviewer that the neighbour who used to babysit the children stopped to take other employment.

fifteen minutes to half an hour. They watch T.V. or whatever, it depends on what sports event is on that morning at school. Usually they're at school by eight o'clock.
Interviewer: That's okay for them to get there that early?
Mother: Yes, 'cause they're playing basket-ball or volley-ball or whatever. Or like I say, this winter we've been lucky and construction guys have been here so you know, if they wanted to stay home until quarter to nine 'cause the schools not far, then they would be able to.

Day-care centres were not used by any of the families interviewed. However, many Hill School parents placed their pre-schooler or kindergarten student in a nursery school. This is a strategy only used by the Hill School parents, possibly because of the cost involved. Mrs. Smith, who is a nursery school teacher, explains what kind of school it is.

Interviewer: I see. So the mothers and parents who would be using ----- [name of nursery], would they be working parents or would they be using it for stimulation or that sort of thing?
Mother: Some of them are working but the majority of them are like, there's not a lot of kids around or some of them will get recommended into a nursery program if they have behaviour problems and things like that, that kind of thing. There's speech problems and things of that nature that they can - being around others will help them.
Interviewer: I see. So it would be useful as day care just if the person worked part time themselves and the hours would have to fit around.
Mother: Ummhum. We have some though that; like one mother's a nurse so depending on her shift, if the mother doesn't pick her up, the baby sitter picks her up.

In this group of families we found four cases where children stay alone after school. In the Banks family, the son calls his mother for permission to go to a friend's house, or he can go to his sister's babysitter; also a neighbour keeps on eye on him. In the Ealing family, the daughter stays alone occasionally. Most days she has activities after school hours. Mrs. Ealing talks about the strategies specific to the pre-teen age group.

Mother: And coming up soon, about another four weeks, I have to work evenings from 3:00 to 10:00, three days a week. About three weeks of it at the hospital. And that I haven't worked out yet.

You see, one of the difficulties, it means that she has to come home from school or go someplace or somebody has to be here. And right now I don't have anybody here where she can walk to their house. Places where she's stayed so far, I've taken her there. What I would like is to have some place where she could walk to.
Interviewer: And then THAT'S a concern
Mother: That is.Because especially since she's not twelve -- babysitting is not such a good ... not such a good ...
Interviewer: No. She probably doesn't think that she needs one
Mother: That's right. But she can't be alone. She's probably going to want to choose who she's ... So it's really a very awkward ... and I don't know yet how I'm going to ... I have some ideas but it's not as practical ... not as convenient as I like.

The use of pre-school and after school activities as a way of bridging the work and school schedule gaps is mentioned by some parents at Hill School. The problem is that the activities are not offered as a regular program. In the Gifford family, three children (11, 8 and 6 years old) stay alone for 5 to 10 minutes. The girl, 6, stays and watches her brothers while they play sports in school, or goes to a neighbour's.

Interviewer: So then what happens? Do the boys ever stay after school for anything?
Mother: Yeah, quite a bit. It's starting more now and it was in the fall. They were both into running. They're both cross country runners and this sort of thing.
Interviewer: So I guess if you were a little bit later, there's things for them to do after school.
Mother: Well and [daughter] has been told if the boys are cross country running or stuff, then she's to sit and watch them. If for some reason I have to be late and I know it, then I'll tell her to stay with them or go, the women next door used to babysit them when they were little so, you know, that sort of thing.

Mrs. Gifford mentions another strategy as a way of inculcating the proper behaviour rules in children left without adult supervision -- watching movies and discussing pertinent news items.

Mother: Well, she's very intelligent for her age, and we've sat down and we've watched the movie "Adam" and other things like that.

The lack of after school activities for younger children is a concern to some of the parents in this school area.

In the Schiller family, two children (9 and 11 years old) stay alone for 1/2 to 1 hour. Mrs. Schiller tells us of an innovative, albeit expensive, strategy to avoid having the children wear a key around their necks. Otherwise, the rules of conduct that she tries to instill in her children are commonly used by other parents.

> Mother: They have had, for the past month, rehearsals for a concert, so they've been coming home later than I have.
> Interviewer: Are they both in this?
> Mother: Yes. So they've gotten home at 5:00. But before that, and now, they'll be home by about quarter to 4:00.
> Interviewer: And do they both have keys?
> Mother: No, we have a combination that's on our garage. So they've memorized it and punch it in. So there's no key. There's nothing around their neck and I like that better.
> Interviewer: So they might be on their own a little while.
> Mother: At the most an hour, maybe.
> Interviewer: Do you have rules about what ...
> Mother: Yes. They can't have anyone in. They can't play anywhere but in our yard. They answer the phone and if it's anyone they don't know, it's "Mom's in the shower -- she's in the washroom". And they take a message.
> We had someone that my husband and I have known since we were little, come to the door and they wouldn't let them in. [chuckles] And I really appreciated that. Because we said, "No one". And I was really pleased that they didn't go, "Oh, well we know him" or "our parents know him and it's probably okay to let him in".

Some of the scheduling strategies mentioned by the Hill School families include:

1. A neighbourhood boy/girl comes over until the children leave for school in the morning or after school.

2. The children go to a babysitter after school.

3. A grandparent (resident or living close by) babysits.

4. One parent drops the children off at school and the other parent is home when the children arrive from school.

5. The mother stays at home with the children until they leave for school because her schedule is flexible.

LAKE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

We identified the same number of morning (3) and after school (4) situations in the Lake School families as in the Hill School families. In the Bardot family, the children, aged 12 and 16, stay alone for one hour before leaving for school. In the Calensky family with 15 and 9 year olds, the younger child goes to his cousin's home and from there to school. The teenaged sister does not seem to be available at the needed times.

> Son: Four o'clock. Sometimes I'm late, like tomorrow I'm going to be late. Joining up for junior boys' basketball.
> Mother: He's usually home between five after four and ten after four and Dad is home at quarter to four.
> Son: Sometimes I'm home before you.
> Mother: Well he knows that he can go next door ... if there's any problem or any reason or if he has to be any longer than ten minutes in the house or fifteen minutes in the house.

In the Miner family, twin boys aged 11 and their sister, 8 years old, stay alone in the morning for 45 minutes. The children of this family attend three different schools. One strategy this mother used was to have a teenaged sitter. Now the bus driver calls and reminds the younger child to get ready before picking her up.

> Mother: Okay I leave here at ten to 7:00. Now up until Christmas of this year, I had a young lad down the street coming in. He didn't come down here until about a quarter after 7:00. And he would stay until [daughter] left. And all he was basically here for was as a buffer zone so the three kids didn't fight. ... Because when ... by the time I leave at ten to 7:00, [daughter] who's the only one who's young enough that I have to make sure she has everything. She knows where her mittens are, she knows where everything is -- is ready. When I walk out that door at ten to 7:00, and I only work two blocks away, so when I leave here at ten to 7:00, she's is completely ready, in my room, because the bus comes to the front -- watching TV in our bedroom. I try to keep her in there, out of the way of the boys. Because if we don't we're going to have a problem.

Now, after Christmas this year, we decided ... THEY decided that they thought they could do this on their own. We had one day when they called me at work and we had a real problem with it. But other than one day, everything has gone off very smoothly in the morning.

Now [daughter's] bus driver is a real big help. She phones her at 7:30. Tells her she's leaving her house now. [Daughter] is her first pick up in the morning. So when the bus driver phones, she knows it's time to get everything on -- get the ski pants on; get everything on and be waiting at the door for the bus to pull up.

The bus driver calls and I would then sometimes call about 7:15 if I can. If I can't I'm allowed to call at 7:45 and make sure that [daughter] did get on the bus and the bus has come and ...

In one family, the Kinseys, the teenaged children do not want to babysit partly because they hold a job like the other teenagers in our group of families. Given the parents' long work hours and the fact that the only close extended family member moved away, this has made it by far the most difficult situation in our study population.

Mother: Sometimes if somebody doesn't turn up for their shift and I'm supposed to be off at 5:00 -- well, it's my responsibility, I have to stay. So that means that I have to worry. Like if I'm not home until 9:00 or 10:00, and it has happened, like I have to phone and say, "Okay" -- if [teenager] is here, 'cause sometimes he's working -- and say, "Can you make this for [sibling] for supper?" Lots of times I freeze ahead if I can, so that they can just throw it into the microwave. And make sure he's in bed on time and help him with his homework and this and that. But until you're in the house, your stomach is just in a knot wondering if they followed through. Or coming in and seeing him eating at 9:00 or 10:00 at night and saying, "What are you doing eating now? You're supposed to be showered and into bed." "Oh, well ..."

In the fourth family, the Holts' son, age 7, has stayed alone for a 20 minute period.

Interviewer: So on a day you would work, after school, what does [son] do?
Mother: Usually he gets home around ten to 4:00 or 4:30, depending on how much he plays or dawdles along the way. And then ... I have given him a key to the front door and he comes in here, on his own, and he'll watch TV or play with his toys. But he locks the door. He's not to answer the phone; the door; or turn on the stove -- you know anything like that. And my husband gets my home about a quarter after.

> Interviewer: Okay, so that's really quite a short time
> Mother: It is, that's why we ... you know if it was like an hour, well, "no". And he's been doing it since November and like I trust him. I know what ... he's not pulled nothing on me, so I trust him. Once he does something, then that's it, eh? And if there was ever a problem, he goes to school with the girl across and street and he knows her -- the neighbour there. He knows all the neighbours, so it's not like he doesn't know them or anything.

These parents try to decrease the number of risks for their children while they are absent from the home by having magnets on the fridge door for notes in addition to using the phone; making frozen meals ahead of time, in part to prevent the children from using the stove. A few parents told the interviewer that a microwave is a good investment. Unlike a stove, children do not seem to have problems handling it. When is it comes to scheduling, the families in the Lake School area use the following strategies:

1. Three parents (two mothers and one father) see children off to school and then go to work -- 9:00 AM starting time.

2. The father works the evening shift.

3. The mother or father arrive home before the children.

4. An older child goes to the preschooler's sitter for the after school period.

5. An older child is home at the needed times before and after school.

It must be added that some of these strategies are not without their limits and while they may work in some families they are no more than partial strategies for others. For example, using the services of an older child at certain crucial times of the day does not work for most of the families with teenagers in our study population. Only the Bardot's son, out of three families with older children, will take consistent responsibility for a younger sibling, particularly as far as morning and after school are

concerned. In the Calensky family, the daughter also helps in this respect but she does not seem to be available on a regular basis. Mrs. Bardot explains that the reason why this strategy works in her family is the similar schedules of both children in the morning and a very convenient work schedule for her son in the evening.

> Mother: I usually leave about quarter to eight.
> Interviewer: What time does your husband leave?
> Mother: My husband leaves about seven thirty. He is supposed to be there at seven thirty [chuckle] but he's, he's slow.
> Interviewer: So then when you both leave then [son and daughter] are left at home so then what happens and who leaves?
> Mother: Usually they leave close to the same time, around eight thirty.
> Interviewer: So are they going in the same direction?
> Mother: Yes, I usually get home about 4:30.... [son] comes home usually right after school 'cause like I say three nights a week or two nights a week he has a part-time job so he has to be at work for five so he comes home to get something to eat. And I tell him I like him to be here when [daughter] comes home so she doesn't come in the house by herself all the time. 'Cause I'm a bit nervous about that. Well sometimes she has sports and she usually tells me. She's pretty good. She usually phones at like lunch time says, like today she did and she said she had a practice so I knew she was going to be late. And then she wanted me to pick her up anyway so. Like it makes me a bit nervous like, you know I check on them quite a bit. Especially when she's here by herself.

In the case of the Holloways, the mother's and the father's work schedules do not coincide -- she works 9 to 5 and he does shift work -- and this works well particularly when the father works evenings. When he works days, if he happens to be late, the gaps are covered by a resident grandmother.

> Father: It's great for the kids because I'm here before they get home. If I'm not here then my mother's here. But I'm usually here
> Mother: Yeah, he usually gets home about a quarter to 4:00 and the kids usually come in around 4:00. And then he's here on the night shift.
> Father: Until she gets home and then I go to work...
> Mother: Yeah, he [son] wants to go before 8:00 some mornings so he can go play in the school yard and I won't let him go. Mornings it's real cold, I just drive them over to school on my way to work, anyway.
> Father: We tend to keep a close eye on them because there was a girl raped down here in the field. And another child was attacked. We have

the rule, too, that if they're being detained at school and we sort of had a bit of an argument with the school -- that if they're having a detention, that's fine with us but we want a phone call to know. Because we weren't getting them last year and ...
Interviewer: And then they would be late coming home from school?
Mother: And we would panic. "Where are they?"
Father: If they're not here by 4:00, I'm out looking
Mother: Yeah. We had to really stress that point with one of the teachers last year. That, "That's fine. Any detention is fine with us or if his work is not finished, fine. But we want a phone call to say that he or she is going to be late." I'm not going to be sitting here wondering where they are.

A few parents in the school area made reference to the field or creek where children, particularly boys, love to play on the way to school but which parents feel is fraught with danger. So insisting that the school call home in case of detention is another strategy initiated by these parents, although they had to "insist" on this small but crucial service.

Taking a school-aged child to the babysitters' is sometimes not agreeable to the child because they see it as a service for pre-schoolers. The Harrison and Holt families mention that their preteen boys do not like to go to babysitters and this can be a source of concern for the parent.

Mother: But if [father] was driving me to work we all leave at the same time because a girl friend just down around the corner here looks after the kids. If it was a "rush" day then I'm gone by 7:30, he would take [daughter] and [son] and drop them at [the babysitter's] about what quarter after 8:00, I guess. [Fa: Yeah] Most of the time I try to be home before [son]. I like to be home when he gets home because he doesn't like going to the babysitter's to be honest about it, you know.

SUMMARY: SCHEDULING STRATEGIES.

In comparing the two groups, we can see the following:

1. The same number of families in both samples, that is half of the those interviewed, have initiated a variety of strategies for ensuring their children's supervision at home while the parents work. The families who need

care in the morning and after school tend to be the same ones -- three out of four in the Hill School group, and two out of two in the Lake School group.

2. The ages of the children in the sample range from 6 to 16 years of age. There are more teenagers "in charge" in the Lake School families. Mothers, rather than fathers take responsibility for keeping in touch with these children, usually by phone. In one case a bus driver is involved in contacting the child.

3. Teenagers are not always a reliable source of babysitting services in their own families. Not only do they have paid employment after school, they usually do not relish spending their leisure time with younger siblings. School-aged children occasionally pose a problem to their parents in that they do not like to be baby-sat by older children or adult baby-sitters.

Families in this sample have made use of the following strategies:

1. Choosing jobs with overlapping hours so that one parent is home until children leave for school and the other arrives home before the children.

2. Having the mother work less than full-time and /or be off for part of the year.

3. Taking children to a babysitter for the morning period and/or picking them up from the babysitter after school.

4. Paying a teenager to cover before and/or after school periods.

5. Making use of extended family (i.e. grandparents or aunt provide care)

6. Having a full-time nanny.

7. Sending a pre-schooler or kindergarten child to a nursery school.

The last two strategies were found only in the Hill School area. There is not one single case of families using day-care centres. The Banks, a Hill

School family, gave us ideological reasons for not sending children to day-care. Mrs. Harrison, a Lake School mother, presents the other side of the question, the serious shortage of subsidized day-care spaces.

> Mother: [Husband's] hours weren't always great. Some weeks he'd get forty hours a week and some weeks he only got sixteen or twenty hours a week. And with, my hours and the wages I was earning when I first started with dry-cleaning, I think $4.50 an hour, we sought out subsidized daycare for [son] because he didn't always know that he would be working today. Like they would call him in the morning -- "Someone called in sick. Can you come in for the day?" or whatever. And it was a mad shuffle to try to find someone to look after [son] and whatnot. And we sought out subsidized daycare for [son] through Social Services. And the man who came to see us, he said, "By the time [son] gets to use this, because the waiting list is so long, he will be in school". And sure enough, when [son] got in school, we got a letter that they had a place for him in subsidized daycare. [chuckle] And I said, "Well, forget it. He's full time now. My hours are a little better."

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES
HILL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.

When comparing the two schools in terms of the information contained in the interviews, Hill School seems to have the greatest number of before and after school activities (as well as lunch time) including both sports and arts. These may take place between 8:00 and 9:00 A.M., 12:00 to 1:00 P.M. and 3:30 to 5:00 P.M.; only children who are involved in such programs are allowed in the building early since school staff are only required to start supervising at 8:45. The programs and activities which could include music, sports, and drama, are only offered to children 6 and up, therefore excluding children in kindergarten. Some activities take place during lunch hour.

Because children cannot enter the school building earlier than 8:45 A.M. unless they are involved in a pre-school program, the majority of working parents have to look for other alternatives for child supervision. According

to one parent, Mr. Graham, kindergarten children cannot be in school before 9 A.M.

> Father: Well, you know the schools are really guilty of the same thing [as employers]. [Daughter] is in kindergarten and they don't want the children at school before five to 9:00. If both parents have to be out the door at 8:00, what does a child do between 8:00 and five to 9:00?
>
> We were involved with a nursery school that's just two blocks away and the children ... we had to pay extra to drop her off. They didn't want any of the children there before ten after 9:00. And Melanie paid extra so we could take [daughter] 20 minutes early. She would drop her off at ten to 9:00 and then make this mad dash to be at school for five to 9:00, because really, our school program starts at five to 9:00.
>
> I was talking to another teacher at school who was saying that she got a note home from the school saying, "Please try not to drop your children off before five to 9:00". This was from an elementary school. And she's saying that in her particular case, it's about a twenty minute drive from where she lives to our school. You know, how totally inflexible on the part of the school saying, "Don't drop ..."

Given this rule, many parents come to believe that there can be no pre-school program in their school, even when there is one. In fact, only two families mentioned any before school activities -- sports, choir and theatre practice. Mrs. Basset's experience is that most activities take place during lunch hour.

> Mother: Yeah, they yeah, like choir and you know that odd sport event or stuff like that, eh? I mean it's not on a regular basis that they stay. Most of the stuff that she's in is at noon hour right, except for choir right, like if you're into any sports it's during noon hour most of the time, eh. There's not much that there is after school to keep them there okay?

Mrs. Banks thinks that the division between lunch and after school activities depends on the age of child.

> Mother: [Daughter's] in choir at school and that's conducted during the lunch hour because of the grade [2]. Instead of keeping them after school, they have them at lunch.

After school activities seem to be more prevalent in Hill school -- opera, choir practice, concert rehearsals and sports. Although in principle extra-curricular activities are available to students from grade one up, in practice, this is not the case according to some parents. In the Gifford family, their six-year old daughter sits and watches her older brothers play sports because she is not allowed to go home by herself. Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Mason also confirmed that there are no activities for their children; one in kindergarten, one in grade one and a third in grade two.

> Interviewer: What kind of programs are there at Hill School after school for the children that have to stay?
> Mother: I was just going to mention that I know of schools in Toronto where there are after school programs but particularly at our age level anyways there isn't anything. [Daughter] is in choir and that happens to be after school but [son] doesn't have anything and most of the children, I would say all of the children in grade 1-2-3, anyway, are gone at 3:30 which is very early when you consider most work places and their time...

The Grahams also point out the limited (and limiting) number of community activities for pre-schoolers after work hours. They seem to be offered only during the day for non-working parents.

> Father: I've really had my eyes opened, this year being off, because in all the programs I'm involved in with [daughter] I'm the only male in the programs. The vast majority of the women in them are women who are just coming off pregnancy or who are apparently pregnant. And there aren't that many people out there who have the luxury of only having one person working, hence be free to enter into these programs. There's even a daycare program that ... actually it's a nursery school program that [daughter] is going to involved next year, but to BE in the program, you must be free to volunteer three days a month. There are very few people ... if ... we couldn't have [daughter] in it last year, because we didn't have anybody available.

In addition, parents in both schools use other community programs such as Boy Scouts/Cubs/Beavers and Girl Guides/Brownies, the Sea Cadets, Pioneer Girls, a church sponsored program, crafts, arts and sports at the Central Hall

Settlement and the Arts Resources Centre. Children also take part in organized sports which include out of town competitions, swimming, skating, hockey and baseball, music practice, bible studies and Ukrainian folk dance practice.

Hill School is not prepared to give publicity to church-sponsored programs which are the most affordable for low income families. According to information given by the principal, many agencies ask permission to distribute flyers in the school; the problem is the screening of agencies. The school can only distribute interdenominational material but a lot of the programs in existence are run by churches. Some of them distribute flyers out in the street for the children to take home but the school cannot be seen giving them out. Therefore programs such as Pioneer girls cannot be advertised in school whereas Boy Scouts or the YWCA programs can.

Older children in general, and boys in particular, seem to participate more in extracurricular activities. Also some boys, particularly in Hill School, participate regularly in sports that are either sponsored by the school or the city of Oshawa. The children either walk or are driven to these programs by a parent, usually the mother. But the strain of driving children from place to place and spending the time to accompany them to programs was proving to be a heavy burden on some of the Hill School parents, like Mrs. Gifford, Ms. Ealing and Mrs. Mason.

> Mother: Lately it's been nothing but hockey! Hockey, hockey, hockey. Last year when they were only on one hockey team each during winter then we would do hockey and then we would do groceries and then we would do whatever else we wanted to do for that day. Lately we've had the last few weeks where they've had four games in a Saturday starting at say eight o'clock in the morning and the last one at four thirty so you're exhausted from cheering and carrying on and tying skates and if we have enough energy, then we would go and get groceries after...

Mrs. Banks' son, 11 years of age, is also heavily involved in sports whereas her daughter, 7 years old, has no other activity than choir in school.

One parent, Mrs. Smith, refuses to get involved in such a demanding activity as the hockey games for her older son, particularly given that her husband is not free to participate in the children's extracurricular programs.

> Interviewer: Are there things to do after school? Do they have after school programs at Hill School that they...?
> Mother: No, not that I..like not as you mean... There's things but not at this age.

The Masons actually cut down on the number of extracurricular activities or avoid them altogether because of all the "running" involved.

> Mother: No. This year, I have really tried to cut back. We don't have anything going on Monday to Friday nights. We had, in the last couple years - we've had a couple things on during the week that were making us run, it seemed, an awful lot of the time.... Also I took my primary specialist in the last two years and I took it in one year actually. So that meant three courses in one year and I was very busy. So this year, coming through that time of having different things, we don't have anything on in the week nights and we really like it.

Ms. Ealing described for the researchers the number of programs available in her community, while also noting the time and energy it takes to keep her child involved in them.

These quotes suggest that although there might be a considerable number of activities going on in the neighbourhood, the sheer effort of coordinating and getting to them places a heavy burden on parents. A diversified after school program, both in content and in the age groups that could make use of them, might lighten the load for some of these parents. The co-ordination of the various community programs is just as important.

LAKE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.

According to information contained in the interviews, Lake School seems to offer only sports as extracurricular activities. This impression was not confirmed by the principal who gave us this account of her extracurricular activities school program.

The emphasis is on sports. In the morning there are gym practices for the junior competitive inter-school games (grades 4 to 8). At noon, on alternate days, there are house league sports, choir and drama as well as the signing club for deaf students. The activities of more general interest take place at noon. After-school there are extra choir practices and coaching of school teams and games. The activities cover all age groups except kindergarten but the emphasis is on grade four and older students.

When asked whether the inter-school games involve out of town competitions, the principal said that there is some of it but the school noticed that the parents are not keen on it because of the extra driving involved. Some parents do not have a car whereas others have shift work. Also she noticed there is not "the same depth of interest as other schools" when it comes to extracurricular activities.

No programs in the school are organized by the Oshawa Recreation Division. However, one of the churches has rented the facility for many years and offer programs for certain age groups, including Pioneer Girls.

As far as other community programs are concerned, the principal also mentioned that the "YWCA runs an activity program for $3 a day in certain schools in Oshawa with varying degrees of success. About four years ago, the YWCA surveyed schools for interest in such a program and it took [hold] in the odd school". The fee includes morning, lunch and after school activities. The

main problem with the activity program seems to be the high turn-over of staff. At one point there was a flyer circulating in Lake school about that program but the principal did not see it as the type of school where such a program would generate much interest. Contrary to what happens in Hill School, most parents in Lake School do not seem to be very involved in school programs. Only the Calenskys' son participates fully in the sports activities.

> Son: Yeah and we have oh, what's it called - electives day and we get to pick whatever we want and I picked bowling this year. And that's some sport time. I'm glad we have it too. We get time off of school.
> Interviewer: After school, do you have any...you said you were going to sign up for basketball is it?
> Son: Yes, during lunch basketball
> Interviewer: Okay and would that be after school? Once a week?
> Son: And then some games will be on Saturday.
> Mother: Now hold it. It's not once a week, it's three times a week isn't it?
> Son: Twice. Monday and Wednesday.

The Holloway children also attend a number of after school programs, both at the school and at other community centres.

Mrs. Harrison was unfamiliar with after school programs in the school or in the community.

> Interviewer: What about after school -- are there any activities after school that [son] can go to?
> Mother: Not at the school there isn't.
> Interviewer: At church or at the Y or anything?
> Mother: I think there's something at the Y. I think that's more for ... that's for people who have their kids enrolled in the Y's daycare.

Even though the YWCA is so close to her home, Mrs. Harrison does not think she is able to make use of the programs. Nor does she avail herself of the day-care services, preferring to leave her children with a friend.

Mrs. Kinsey is equally distressed about the perceived lack of an after school activity program. Unlike the other families interviewed, she is new to the town and is not aware of other community programs.

> Interviewer: But the school itself doesn't have after school programs?
> Mother: No they don't. That would be ideal actually. See if there was something -- even if it was for an hour or an hour and a half after school, it's ... that's the time that always frightens mothers. I don't know, probably fathers too in the same situation. You're afraid of your kid coming from school and coming home. Well, [son] should be old enough to make a sandwich or use the micro wave or whatever, but you always think, "What if something did come up? Like would he know how to handle it?"

Mrs. Kinsey tried to get the children enrolled in an after school program at the school but there was a breakdown in communication. As she describes, programs are available at schools in other school districts and she was hoping to be able enroll her son in a similar program in Lake School.

> See last year, they had Boy Scouts right at his own school. So he went to his own school once a week. And they had a lot of good things. They have different activities on the weekend. He really enjoyed it. That's what I was trying to get him into and then I guess I lost interest after about eight calls, I didn't bother any more.

Parents sometimes request information about community programs from the principal. She has found out that Simcoe Hall, nearby, offers programs for some age groups. The YWCA and the Oshawa Recreation Department routinely distribute their Fall and Spring booklets in the school. There is a fee involved for their programs except for families who cannot afford it. When parents ask questions the principal cannot answer, e.g. summer camps, she refers to the Blue Book put together at City Hall ($16) about community services in Oshawa. This book may not list the different camps but will indicate groups which will provide that information.

The principal also said that some programs like the Cubs are run at the school or churches on Simcoe St. The Settlement House offers an "after 4" program. The library runs a free program whereas the Art Gallery charges for materials. The Arts Resource Centre is run by the Recreation Department. Randall Park offers a variety of activities.

Most families make use of existing community programs. A number of parents said that their children were attending activities such as the Brownies, Sea Cadets (once a week), band practice, wrestling, Cubs and Beavers (once a week), Central Hall Settlement House offers crafts and sports, Pioneer Girls, Girl Guides, theatre arts at the Arts Resource Centre, and some sports such as volleyball, basketball and baseball. In the case of sports, sometimes it is not clear whether these are after school or community centre programs.

The Miner children also attend a number of programs. Mrs. Miner identifies the particular problem of children who do not live close to school. Her three children go to different schools because of learning disabilities. This seems to be another argument in favour of a diversified after school activities program.

> Mother: That's another problem with all the kids being bussed all over the place -- their school friends aren't within walking distance. They really don't have a social life with the children they attend school with because they're not close by.

Other than the Kinsey family in the Lake School study group, families in both schools have children who are currently attending or have attended a variety of programs. But some Lake School families, unlike families at Hill School, do not seem to be informed about other activities at school, or perhaps they are not interested. As we will see later, some Lake School parents seem to be unfamiliar with lunch hour programs as well as of pre-

school sports practices. Could the principal be right when she said that these parents are not as interested in extracurricular activities as parents in other schools? How does this perception compare with the parents' recommendations with respect to the desirability of activity programs in schools?

PARENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS: BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

All families in the Hill School group expressed a need for more before and after school programs. Two parents, the Grahams and the Schillers, thought that school space and facilities are underutilized and that there is a great need for after school programs involving physical activities. In addition, they noted that school activities are not coordinated with community programs. Most of the community programs require one parent to be free to volunteer.

> Mother: You're starting to raise an interesting question -- if school's becoming a daycare or a after hours care. Rather than the "latchkey kids" ... I know that a lot of the parents are looking towards the school to do something or the board or whoever. I don't know. And I think that the school building is a classic example of a building that's always been totally underused. There's never been a great deal of cooperation, particularly in this board, between the school board and the city. They're constantly squabbling over who's using the land and the same thing with the building. They've got this program called "Community Uses Schools" which is an interesting name but a real problem. Because in certain schools, the school itself has programs to run. And there needs to be some way of coordinating those things. I know that in other communities they do a much better job of meshing their community centres and schools together.

Another parent, Mrs. Mason, expressed a desire for after school programs that would include physical activity, arts and crafts plus a quiet time.

> Interviewer: Do you think if there were programs before school and after school people would take advantage of them?
> Mother: If they could, if they would prefer to do physical activity they could have a choice of doing that or if they liked to do the arts and

> crafts. A lot of the kids enjoy working with plasticine, sand, water and maybe don't get as much opportunity to do it as they should because some teachers are caught up in the pencil and paper type activities. But, if they had blocks and lego and those sorts of things to build and make things. If we had more playground equipment - large motor. We do have a little bit but not enough and it would be lovely to have something like that. Also maybe something that would be a quiet time too because some kids are tired after a day at school and they need to just... they need to relax and maybe you know, watch, listen to some music or watch some type of...not the garbage that's on television but something that would be good for them.

One parent, Mrs. Gifford, suggested before school programs with story-reading and games. Two others, Ealing and Basset, said that more programs outside of school hours with supervision are required. One parent, Mrs. Banks, would like to see more community programs after school -- sports, music and other creative activities.

Finally, the Hill School principal suggested that the City of Oshawa do the screening and co-ordinating work and recommend which programs should be publicized in school rather than leave that work and decisions up to the individual schools.

In the Lake School research group, only a few parents expressed the need for more programs. One of them, Mrs. Bardot, said that her daughter would be worried that an after school program would conflict with homework and other extracurricular activities.

> Interviewer: Would you be glad if there was a regular program after school for an extra hour?
> Mother: It depends. I guess it depends on if she wanted to and how heavy her homework was 'cause she's very, like conscientious. She worries about her work so she just, you know. Like she plays basketball after school sometimes but and she goes to theater arts at night.

The Holloways expressed more concerns about the curriculum than about activities. This is understandable given that a lot of the Lake school children in the research group were experiencing some difficulty at school.

The parents who did express concerns, like Mrs. Miner, said they would like the churches to inform nearby schools of their programs, e.g. Pioneer Girls.

> Mother: I have been meaning to call the Baptist Church up here on the corner. (I went to Pioneer Girls up there when I was a little girl), to see if they still have Pioneer Girls. But the problem with a lot of these programs, and especially church programs, is that if you're not a member of that specific church, you don't know about them. And that may be something that could be done through the churches -- I mean the churches that are close to a school, if they could give enough information to the schools so we all knew about these programs -- that they are there to be used by the children or for the children -- we would all use them a little bit more efficiently.

The Calensky family would like an after school program of one or one and a half hours. An after school program with more sports, music and dancing was suggested.

> Interviewer: Can you think of any programs the school could do after school that you would be interested in [son] going to or that he would like to..?
> Father: I personally would like to see more involvement with music at a young age...
> Son: We have music for just about an hour Dad.
> Father: What was that?
> Son: We have music for just about an hour.
> Mother: That's during school right?
> Son: Yeah.
> Father: During school, oh I see.
> Interviewer: You mean things like an orchestra or band or..
> Father: No, just to learn the I don't know if it'd be the principles of music or it'd be the basic knowledge or something, any thing. Like I'm not just fond with music. Like I play an instrument and I'd like to go beyond that myself. I'd like to see my kid get it at any early age.

When the principal was told that some of the parents were not familiar with the programs offered by the school, she suggested that perhaps she should talk more to children about programs instead of sending flyers home which may not get read or may be lost.

SUMMARY: BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

When comparing the sample groups in both schools in terms of parents' awareness, willingness to use and their evaluation of existing school and community programs, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Although both schools tend to have a similar number and type of before and after school programs, Lake School seems to place more emphasis on sports and inter-school competitions. Both schools offer very little in the way of before school programs or activities tailored for the children in the lower grades (1-3).

2. Parents in the Hill School area seem to be more aware of school programs and more willing to have their children attend them. They also expressed greater interest in having before and after school programs -- physical activities, arts and crafts. Lake School parents are more inhibited when it comes to making any kind of demands on the school system.

3. Children in both school areas attend a variety of community programs although mothers in the Hill School area spend a great deal more time driving their children to and from these programs. This tends to give the impression that Lake Hill parents are less interested in enrichment activities, an impression which is not substantiated in our interviews.

4. Parents, particularly those in Hill School, regret the limited choice of programs for pre-schoolers and wish for a better co-ordination of programs in the community.

5. Parents in Lake School, given the school's proximity to one of the churches and willingness to advertise their activities (unlike Hill School), often send their children to church programs which are also very affordable.

6. Principals' recommendations confirm that the coordination of school and community programs and the communication between home and school about

such programs need serious consideration on the part of municipal and school authorities.

The reasons why the YWCA activity program has not taken hold in more schools may not be a problem with the concept but with its implementation given the interest of parents in more programs of this kind.

The parents' recommendations in both schools are similar in essence; the difference is that more Hill School parents are more aware of what is needed in terms of programs. Many of the Hill School sample group parents are teachers and have an insider's knowledge of the school's programs. The familiarity with schools, school programs and the issues that arise in developing a more extensive program is a feature of the Hill School parents' knowledge; a knowledge that the school seem to have taken for granted. Where parents do not have that kind of familiarity, as in the Lake School neighbourhood, the school's methods of getting information to the families requires re-thinking.

LUNCH TIME PRACTICES

"Lunch programs" are now available in all Ontario Schools. This policy development reflects, in part, the economic reality of the two-income family. By and large, however, the programs offered are no more than a very basic service which is considered extraneous to the work of the school. The children are allowed to eat their lunches in school supervised by a part-time employee and/or volunteer parents and teacher(s) on "lunch duty".

HILL SCHOOL FAMILIES.

According to the principal, the lunch program at Hill School involves 250 children. Children eat their lunches in the gym, hall or classroom depending

on current school space needs. There is one paid supervisor and a teacher on call both in the lunchroom and in the playground. Lunch is one hour long and there is no milk program.

The main difference between the families in the two schools is that most children in Hill School come home for lunch on a regular basis. They eat in school only when there is choir practice or baseball, or for a change in their routine, e.g. the fund-raising pizza lunches.

Mrs. Smith, who works half time, likes her children (six and eight years old) to come home to lunch for reasons connected to her personal history.

> Mother: It takes maybe ten minutes [extra], they might be late going back at noon but if the next eight years go as fast as the first eight years, my kids are going to be gone, basically is the way I see it, I really do. That's important to me. Maybe it doesn't mean anything to them but maybe it will when they're twenty five or thirty.

Two of the parents, Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Banks, did not like their children eating lunch at school. They were very critical of the lunch hour supervisory arrangements.

> Interviewer: So all of you come home for lunches then?
> Mother: Yes. That's the other advantage of being in the building. In every school there is a long lunch hour. It's an hour with very little to do. I have concerns about this and it's not anyone fault. It's just that there are so many children today with working parents that there are well over one hundred children being looked after by one women.
> Interviewer: Who works at the school?
> Mother: Yes, it was an elderly women who's basically doing this because it's an income supplement. But, ahh, I fear for the safety really, you know. An hour of time that's not missed. It's the same in every school, there isn't enough going on, to keep the kids, uum ...occupied for an hour, yeah and get outside for forty minutes and what do you do outside for forty minutes?

Mrs. Banks does not approve of the facilities (the gym) and the supervision on the playground.

Mother: I think there are volunteer parents who help at lunch. And I think a teacher stays for a short period of time while they're having their lunch. They go to the gymnasium and have their lunch there sitting on the floor, which I'm not keen on and why I don't want the kids to have lunch there all that often.
Interviewer: What is there for them to do at noon, after they've finished their lunch? Do you know?
Mother: Just play outside. They play outside and there is playground equipment in the primary side of the school. There's a soccer field and a baseball field and some hills for sliding in the winter.

Many of the children in this study population are able to eat at home because one of the parents is present (five families). In two other cases, the children eat in school always or most of the time because the parents are not able to be home. One case is exceptional in that the two Gifford boys (11 and 8 years old) sometimes come home for lunch by themselves and call their mother to reassure her that they are doing well. The younger Gifford child attends nursery school in the morning where she has lunch, and goes to kindergarten at the same school as her brothers in the afternoon. The Banks' son, age 11, comes home by choice at lunch time for the first time this year instead of going to his sister's babysitter.

In the Ealing family, the mother is not able to come home. Both mother and daughter feel that it is preferable for the daughter to stay for the school lunch program for both social and safety reasons.

Mother: Yes she likes taking her lunch to school but that's mainly because in her teacher's class, classroom's teacher has helpers, and the helpers eat their lunch IN the classroom. And she's quite often is a helper. So that works out all right. I don't like the thought of her coming home for lunch when I'm not here. So we haven't even discussed that.

LAKE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

In the lunch program at Lake School, students eat in the classroom with teacher supervision. If there are less the usual number of children, children from another classroom will join in so that children might be switching classrooms frequently. There are between 120 and 150 children in the lunch program and they have about 25 minutes to eat. Once children finish they go outside to play, supervised by a paid person.

On rainy days there is the need for extra supervision so the teachers assist. On these days, the children are divided into two groups according to age and the groups alternate watching a movie. If the House Leagues need to use the Gym, children are re-located for lunch.

Mrs. Holloway said that her children had enjoyed the lunch-time activities in which they had participated.

> Mother: They have outside activities. They've had lunchtime activities. [Daughter] was in theatre arts there for awhile. And they're both in the jump rope for the Heart Foundation right now. They just did that last week. And that was at lunch time I believe. I guess, basically, everything else is before or after school.

All the children in this study group take their lunch to school. In only one case, the Harrison family, is this done by choice. However, Mrs. Harrison, like the other parents in our study group, is critical of the school's lunch program.

> Mother: [Son] doesn't like to come home. He doesn't have time, he feels, to come home for lunch and walk back to school and play on the play ground. So they have their lunch room down there. He eats his lunch and nine times out of ten, his lunch is eaten but I find that a lot of times he doesn't eat it because there's such a big hurry. I don't know. He says the teachers don't give them enough time, or whoever's supervising, they don't give them enough time because, of course, I guess they have to eat their lunches too. Why they don't eat with the kids I don't know but ...

The Miners were quite critical of the lunch program for the same reason: the children are rushed through lunch.

> Mother: I try once a week to take [daughter] out to lunch -- a hot lunch -- MacDonalds or something like that so that she gets a treat too. One day I didn't get there to her school until 10 minutes to 12:00. Now they're out quarter to 12:00 at twenty to 12:00 for lunch. And when I walked into the room at 10 to 12:00 with her lunch, the teachers in the room were already telling the children to hurry up and pack up their lunches and get out of the classroom. Now [daughter] had TOLD me that she didn't have time to eat all her lunch -- "They don't give me time to eat all my lunch". Remembering that children -- no child eats as quickly as an adult -- they all sort of play with their food a little bit. You know like "What kind of sandwich is this?" [chuckles] Like I felt they were being really unfair to give them fifteen minutes to eat their lunch and then they have to go outside. And in that fifteen minutes, after the first five minutes, they started them "Hurry up", "C'mon hurry up and eat", "Hurry up, eat" and "Hurry up you've got to go outside now", "Get your stuff on", "Hurry up", "Where's your mittens?" Like to me, the lunchtime should be not so rushed.

The Calenskys' son mentioned that although there are no organized activities, the children are allowed to play with sports equipment, such as balls.

Other parents alluded to the fact that the children have little time to eat but some do not seem sure of the facilities; a cloak room, a hall, the gym and a classroom were the places mentioned by parents and children. Nor were parents clear about whether a teacher or an outsider is paid to supervise the children both inside and in the playground. Finally all parents mentioned Pizza-day monthly lunches that take place in school and that all children seem to enjoy.

Although there is no structured play time period at lunch, there are some lunch hour activities as described by some of the parents and their children, and by the principal of the school. However, the parents' relative lack of knowledge about the school lunch-time activities is striking considering that

their children eat their lunch at the school. This should not be seen as a lack of interest on the part of the parents, but rather as a failure in home-school communication which, as our research shows, also extends to other areas.

PARENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS: LUNCH PROGRAMS.

The idea of a hot lunch in the school is not altogether unknown in schools, for example the hot dog or pizza lunches, often for the purposes of fund-raising. None of the parents or children in our research groups objected to these lunches. On the contrary, they were seen as a welcome change in the children's routine. Some parents (the Giffords and the Banks at Hill School) went even further and supported the idea of hot lunches in school on a regular basis.

> Mrs. Gifford: I know it's such an asset for [daughter] that she is at the nursery school and she has a hot meal every lunch hour. And she's also become a very good eater because I think at the nursery school, you eat everything that's on your plate...
> Interviewer: What about if they were to have a hot lunch program at noon at the school. Do you think that would help at all?
> Mrs. Banks: I think actually that would be wonderful if they had the facilities for them to sit down and have their meal.

The Lake School parents, when asked about hot school lunches, also expressed interest in the idea. The Calenskys noted that their child's strong likes and dislikes of certain foods would perhaps be a problem. The Harrisons, on the other hand, approved of the idea of hot school lunches.

> Interviewer: How would you feel if the school were to have a hot lunch program?
> Mother: I think it would be nice.
> Interviewer: Would you be willing to pay for it? ....
> Mother: Yeah, it would be because we both DO work. I mean, I swear that there's a lot of children that don't have as much as a sandwich in their lunch bags and it bothers me.

But the Holloways thought that a full lunch program might not be economically feasible for them.

> Mother: ... we put out a lot of money towards school projects and things as it is. So additional money -- there's always something, eh? There's Pizza Day, and like this Heart Foundation -- I mean its a good cause but there's always something. There was [daughter's] trip that was $60.00. I don't know, there always seems there's something we have to put money out. Sometimes ... I think it's too much.

Mrs. Bardot, also of Lake School, said that she would prefer a hot lunch be offered weekly as a way of breaking the children's daily routine. The Miners had put the idea of a change in the routine into practice by allowing their children to eat out at a restaurant once a week.

The same set of arguments for and against a hot lunch program applies to the idea of a breakfast program. One parent said that a breakfast program would cut too much into school time.

A number of parents at both schools would like to see some items for sale at lunch and at recess, for example, soup in winter, apples and milk. As Mrs. Miner noted, she cannot send milk with her daughter as there is no way to refrigerate it at the school. Mrs. Miner stated:

> There's no milk at the school anymore. So we spend a fortune to buy these little boxes -- things that are full of sugar to send with them. I would rather that she would be getting a glass of milk. Because we pay for it anyway. We buy all these stupid things like pap and other stuff that we KNOW they're not good for them. So like obviously we would pay for milk. I would be satisfied with that.

One parent said that there had been a flyer from Lake School about making milk available to children but this initiative was not followed by concrete action. The principal of Lake School, when told of the parents' interest, said that she had been considering having milk sold on the school premises.

Another kind of parent recommendations refer to organized lunch activities and better supervision and safety inside and outside the school building. Most of these came from Hill School parents and one from a Lake School parent. The Grahams from Hill School had this suggestion to offer.

> Mother: I consider that elementary school teachers need some time for themselves because they do not get a break at all from what I know of their situation. So it's either going to be a parent volunteer that's coming into the school to run some kind of "structured" activity or it's going to have to be someone who has one period off -- the grade 5 and 6 music teacher, they get that period FOR the lunch hour. Their lunch then becomes 1:00 or 1:30 which is sometimes what we have to do. So I could see that. And if that's the case, certainly. I could see the extracurricular activities becoming part of the program.

SUMMARY:LUNCH TIME PRACTICES, STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Project parents from both schools are, on the whole, very critical of their school lunchtime practices attesting to the inadequacy of such a program as it exists in Ontario schools.

1. More Hill School children come home for lunch because more parents are available at that time of day. Also, more parents in this school are aware of features of the lunch program that they do not like (being themselves teachers) than Lake School parents. They are critical of facilities, supervisory arrangements and lack of organized lunch activities.

2. Lake School parents are less knowledgeable about facilities, supervision and lunch activities although most have their children eat at school. What parents know and do not like is the fact that children must rush through lunch and go out to the yard to play with a minimum of supervision.

3. As far as recommendations go, many parents in both schools approved the idea of hot lunches, at least on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Some Lake School parents feared the cost of a daily hot lunch program. At the very least, parents would like to see a milk, fruit or soup program available.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS AND HOLIDAYS: STRATEGIES

HILL SCHOOL FAMILIES

Three families in this school rely on extended family (grandparents or an aunt who lives within walking distance) to look after the children on PD days. In two out of the three families, the Masons and the Schillers, and in a fourth family, the Grahams, the mother is a teacher and they have no problem covering for the spring and the Christmas holidays. But, in all cases, professional development days require a variety of strategies to supervise the children. Mrs. Mason relies on her husband and sister.

> Mother: Yeah, well if [father] is on days though - if he's on nights its fine, he'll be home and if he's on days the kids will go over to my sister. She lives just across the street so we're really...I've helped her a lot and she's not working...

The Bassets who are fortunate to have "flex time" and the possibility of banking their time at work as well as generous holiday time, take a holiday during school holiday periods.

> Interviewer: Okay. How about PD days. What happens when it's a PD day and the school is closed?
> Mother: Well, [husband] used to take the day off 'till this year. Because this one is now in grade 9 and their PD days are the same, [older daughter] usually babysits [the younger daughter]....
> Interviewer: How about spring break and Christmas vacation which is a whole week?
> Mother: Well, quite fortunately, [father] has this time at work that he builds up that he takes for holidays. So he takes that week off at Christmas time. GM is pretty generous at Christmas time so if it's just a couple of days...

Those families who do not have close relatives living nearby, have to find other strategies to cover for PD days, sick days and Spring and Christmas

holidays. Two families rely on the father to take the day off. Some parents take days off alternately. Some women take turns with friends to look after each other's children, or use a combination of both strategies as the Smiths and the Giffords do.

> Interviewer: So you said you were looking after a neighbour's child.
> Mother: Just for today. This is just an unusual..she phoned last night and needed help so I said fine. She was going..we had made arrangements to watch each other's kids on PD days and then she got a job so that was the end of that. So, I don't know what she does for PD days 'cause my husband often can take the morning off so ...he'll just say he's off today. Because of his position he can wield a bit of power.

The Giffords also pay a teenager to babysit the children during the shorter holidays.

> Interviewer: What happens on PD days?
> Mother: Actually we take turns taking days off for PD days. I have had girl friends who aren't working, used to work with us or what ever and they'll watch them for the day. Easter and Christmas time I have my girl friend's sixteen year old son come in and look after them.

In three other families, the children go to the youngest child's sitter, or the older child may go to a friend's house. Mrs. Banks describes the complicated arrangements for her family:

> Interviewer: What happens on PA days? [Daughter] spends the whole day at the baby sitter's and...
> Mother:...at the baby sitter's yeah, and we make arrangements for [son]. He usually goes to a friend's house where he spends most of the day and there's a parent there and then he keeps in touch with me all day.
> Interviewer: What about Spring Break?
> Mother: [Son] spent most of this time at a friend's house because his Grandma was there and so he went over there. We made arrangements for him to be over there so that he wasn't alone. I didn't want him to be alone during that time. And then [daughter] would spend the whole time with the baby sitter.
> Interviewer: What arrangements do you have to make if [the children] are sick?
> Mother: Depends. If [daughter] has a cold, or something like that then she goes to the baby sitter's. If [son] is sick then I have to stay

home. One of us do, I shouldn't say I have to stay home. [Father] and I take turns so I use my vacation credits.

Ms. Ealing's situation is exceptional in that she is occasionally able to take her daughter to work. Other times, she arranges for her to stay with a friend. She is still considering various arrangements for the spring and Christmas holidays.

Interviewer: What about PD days, when the school is closed... has that been a problem for you?
Mother Yes! Not a real problem -- it's a concern. I don't have things worked out ... Sometimes she spends the day with her friend. I can take her to the college. Sometimes we expect to do that too. Or I have left her here, when I know that I don't have to spend all day at the college. I can go there in the morning and come back in the afternoon. Easter Monday was the last time that she was off.
Interviewer: She was off and you weren't?
Mother: I wasn't home. And what was worse was that there was a meeting all day that I was committed to. So I couldn't very well get home here until nearly 5:00. I knew we had a meeting. Things would change and we'd go longer and longer and longer. So that was kind of hard. And I left her here because I thought I'd get home. I didn't even come home for lunch...
Interviewer: How about spring break?
Mother: Spring break. That was another difficulty because our break was different than her break. So that was another thing that we had a hard time working through. I'd leave her here with a friend; take her there; and I came home when I could.

For the summer holidays, about half of the parents in this school used summer camps, particularly all-day sports and art camps. Most parents seem to be well informed about these camps. Mrs. Mason commented on the apparent abundance of summer camps and the dearth of before and after school programs in the area. Mrs. Gifford speaks very highly of the camps which her sons usually attend during the summer. Her younger child, 6, spent the summer in nursery school, an alternative mentioned only by parents in this area.

Interviewer: What happens for two months in the summer?
Mother: Last year, [daughter] went to the nursery school full time, the whole day. I'd drop her off in the morning and on the way home I'd pick

her up and the boys went to the Sport's Camps and it was great. I just cannot say enough good things about them.

It is worth noting that only Hill School parents (the Giffords and the Bassets) have made use of a YWCA camp.

While parents in this area consider it inexpensive to send their children to sports or arts camps for the summer because of the good programs they offer, paying about $100 a week for two children could prove to be difficult for working-class parents. In fact, the principal informed the interviewers that the only free camps or those requiring no more than a nominal fee are run by the churches.

However, some children do not like going to camp, like the Basset's children, and some alternative must be found for them.

Interviewer: you have had babysitters in the past?
Mother: Yeah, but like I said, mostly it was just for the summer holidays to give my mother a break and then I would get teenage girls that I worked with, like I never had anyone and last year [sister] was down here, keeping an eye on the kids.

Half of the parents in this group are teachers and have their holidays at the same time as the children. Mrs. Mason used the services of a teenager while she was taking summer courses. Mrs. Banks, also a teacher, plans to hire help for the summer.

Interviewer: Okay, what about summer vacation?
Mother: What we're going to do is...this is the first year for this baby sitter, they usually go away for the summer so I think what we're going to do is...I'm looking at having a student come in to have supervision in the house so that they can be involved with doing things outside and still be around the house and things like that.

There is a day camp organized by the City Recreation Department at Hill School. None of the parents in our research group send their children to this summer camp.

Hill School parents use the following child care strategies during PD and sick days, Spring, Christmas and summer holidays:

1. Parent is a teacher and is home during school holidays.Child might go to day-camp, for a half or full day.

2. Parent works for large company, fact which gives him/her generous holiday time and allows him/her to bank time.

3. Parents uses up vacation credits.

4. Extended family and friends exchange babysitting services during PD days.

5. Parents hire a teenager during holidays; or drop older child at younger child's sitter.

6. Older child goes to friend's house on PD days.

7. Child spends the day at parent's work place.

8. Child attends summer camp.

9. Younger child attends nursery school during the summer.

LAKE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

During Professional Development days, sick days, Spring Break and Christmas holidays, about half the Lake School parents are assisted by their relatives -- either grandparents, aunt or older sibling. Very few hire babysitters.

In the Harrison family, the grand-parents assistance on PD days causes great inconvenience. Mrs. Harrison also recounts how the few women she knows

who are unemployed must look after the children of quite a number of friends, neighbours and relatives during those days.

> Mother: PA days are a problem.
> Father: Not so much because, quite often [mother's] mother looks after the three kids.
> Mother: But that's not fair. My parents run a business out of their house. Like, I mean, although she doesn't work anywhere else, she's got the phone ringing and my father's business running; three kids to tend to.
> Father: I really don't know what some parents do when they come up against it -- those PA days.
> Mother: When I didn't work, I could remember days when I had nine and ten, eleven, twelve [children].
> Interviewer: So you would be helping out your neighbours?
> Mother: Yeah. You know and my friends and not necessarily just my neighbours -- my sister or who ever was STUCK. And in a situation like that you do. But I don't think it's a good situation at all because it puts those few who are out there ... have a lot more children than they can handle.

Two children in the Calensky and Bardot families go to friends' houses or are looked after by a teenage sibling or member of the extended family. However, these family members cannot be relied upon for extended periods of time.

> Calensky Interview:
> Interviewer: What happens then when you're both working and there's PA days at school?
> Mother: Well as long as it coincides with [daughter's] PA day, she looks after him.
> Father: I think it's only been once that it hasn't, it?
> Mother: Yeah, just once this year. Other than that he goes like, to my mom's or my sister looks after him.
> Interviewer: What about Spring Break? Is it the same...?
> Mother: Well [daughter] doesn't work usually all the time through Spring or March Break and any times that she is working, and doesn't coincide with when he's off there's [mother's] sister, her mother or my mother...like we're all within a couple of blocks or so...he can probably walk to my mother's place and...
> Interviewer: Would you like it better if there was a special program at school?
> Mother: Yes, yes.
>
> Bardot Interview:

Interviewer: What do you do about PA days when the school is closed?
Mother: Now she's...like sometimes her brother's home so I'm not concerned and other times she doesn't like being here by herself and sometimes she'll make arrangements with her friends and they'll do something or she'll go to someone's house and then I usually come home and take her there.
Interviewer: Okay so far you've managed to work something out where she's got something organized with her girlfriends doing something. What about if she was really sick and couldn't go to school? What would usually happen?
Mother: I take her over to my mom. My mom is only ten minutes from here so and I have, the last month or so.
Interviewer: So what about March Break and what do you think's going to happen?
Mother: I've been really guilty, you know, like I know some families like they have all planned what their kids are going to do, eh or...I just sort of let them do whatever [chuckle] they wanted, I mean I keep an eye on them but I don't have things planned out for them...

In the case of the Holloways, a combination of next door baby sitters, the extended family and father's shift work solves the child supervision problem. Shift work is also helping the Holt family cope with PD days and the Christmas holiday; GM employees have the same holiday as the schools.

Interviewer: What about PD days?
Mother: Well if [father] is on nights the kids are here with him. He sleeps in the morning and then the kids just sit and watch TV. They're not allowed in or out or anybody in or out while he is asleep. And if he is out, we'll get his mom.
Father: That's a real convenience for us having our mother living in the house because that takes the hassle off the PD days. 'Cause they're not old enough to be on their own.

Unlike the Holloways and the Bassets from the Hill School neighbourhood where the fathers work for GM, some parents take a week off their annual holiday or decide what strategy to adopt on a yearly basis. Such is the case of the Bassets (quoted above), the Miners and the Harrisons.

Interviewer: What happens at spring break?
Mother: I don't know what's going to happen on spring break. We haven't really made a decision yet.
Interviewer: Every year it's coming and you've got to think about what's going to be?

Father: I think last year I took a week of my holiday time to be home with them.

The Kinseys have a real problem coping with PD days, spring break and even sick days. Mrs. Kinsey is counting on her mother, who is coming to live with her soon, to help her partially solve this difficult problem in spite of the fact that her mother has a multitude of health problems.

Interviewer: What happens if [son] is sick. Like too sick to go to school?
Mother: When [son] is sick, he's basically on his own. It has happened and unfortunately. He's in bed -- his father will leave him some soup, or whatever, before he goes to work -- and he's basically there until I come home. And well, there's nothing else I can really do.
Interviewer: What about on PA days?
Mother: Same thing. He's alone. One thing ... I detest these PA days for the simple fact that if they had something else to do -- it's when kids don't have anything to do, I find that they run into trouble. If they had ... I don't know of any community centre close by that DO have functions on PA days. But that would be ideal.

One family, the Calenskys, mentioned that the summer program previously attended by the child was discontinued so now the family must rely on the aunt's assistance to supervise the children during the summer months.

This school does not have any summer program organized by the Recreation Division. But the interviews indicate that some families would greatly benefit from having such a program. For example, Mr. Kinsey started working the afternoon shift, and was unable to pick the child up from day camp. The mother was not able to take his place. This put the family in a very difficult situation.

Mother: Well, I DO have to get him into something. I know we had the kids, before, into a thing at a park and you paid so much a week. But it wasn't ... it was only a nominal fee. It wasn't sky high or anything. It was reasonable and the kids went every day. And sometimes they would take them on an outing, like down to, I don't know, like an art gallery or a zoo or different things. So that there was always different things

> the kids were interested in. And he likes that kind of thing. Like he loves arts and crafts and he LOVES swimming. So that's really the thing. I'd like to get him into something where he can attend the weeks that we need him to attend.

One mother, Mrs. Harrison, is often on layoff and exchanges babysitting services with her regular sitter. The main reason for this strategy is to avoid the type of situation that Mrs. Kinsey describes -- leaving her boy to his own devices. And it also makes it possible, among other things, for her children to go to half-day camp. The Harrison interview from which we quote below, is particularly rich in data about the summer dilemma that under-employed working-class mothers face during the summer -- the costs of babysitting versus paid employment; the limited availability and cost of summer programs.

> Mother: It's hot in dry cleaning and I don't get enough hours. And she [babysitter] gets paid whether I get the hours or not, so sometimes she has my paycheck, plus. So I just don't ... I mean I have a fairly decent employer.
> Father: Dry cleaning drops off in the summer.
> Mother: Like if I get fifteen or twenty hours a week in the summer, forget it it's not worth my time to get up and get two kids dressed and across the road to pay her the same amount whether I get my hours in or not because the kids are still there four or five days a week and she [babysitter] still gets paid, right? I mean she's expecting her money like anybody else.
> Interviewer: So at the present you're satisfied with that arrangement of work and ...
> Mother: Yeah. I know the day's going to come one day where I'm going to have to work my summers and I don't know how I'm going to cope with it because I'm used to being home in the summertime. That way you pretty well know what's going on -- where he [son] is.

This interview also revealed that the school sent information about Boy Scouts camps to the families, but that sending information home does not guarantee that the families will get it. This was confirmed in the Kinsey interview.

The Holloways are well informed about summer camps and have been able to enroll their children in half day camps. The parents' work hours do not coincide and the father does shift work.

> Mother: Now summer time is different. We ...
> Father: We send them off to camps
> Mother: Yeah ... well, the past two years, I've been home. But we usually try and get them in when [father] is on nights, and they're home. And when he's on days, we try and book day camps for them.
> Interviewer: So there's enough available day camps around?
> Mother: I don't know how many are available in Oshawa. We've been sending them to one in Stouffville.

Child care strategies used by Lake school parents during PD days and holidays:

1. Reliance on relatives or older siblings on PD, sick days and shorter holidays; sometimes summer holidays.

2. Mother goes on lay-off during the summer.

3. Father works in large company which offers flexible shift work and generous holiday time. This allows for use of half-day camps.

4. Parents use vacation credits on shorter holidays.

5. Older child goes to friend's house on PD days

6. Younger child goes to babysitter.

PARENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS AND HOLIDAYS.

Parents in general made fewer recommendations for Professional Development Days, Christmas Holidays and Spring Break than they did for before/after school, and lunch programs. Most of the recommendations about summer programs came from Lake School families.

Some families would like to have an alternative setting to send children on PD days. Ms. Ealing's daughter (Hill School) would like to attend a program similar to the one at her previous school.

> Daughter: Like in my old school we, for PA days and special, different things, we had activities -- a lot of activities for all ages. Some of the teenagers, like they don't to play the games young kids do.

The Bassets (Hill School) recommended PD days and Christmas holidays programs.

> Mother: You know, it's not very likely that a parent in every family can take two weeks off during Christmas. They'd have to be well organized and I guess they can't be very expensive because probably a lot of people can't afford anything that's very costly. If you go over 100 bucks a week....[people won't be interested].

Families would like more full-day camps with longer hours, and more activities in the summer. Mrs. Banks from Hill School had this to say.

> Mother: Now mind you, I am fortunate in that I'm in a management position so that I can make my time off flexible and I can pretty much leave if I have to leave to go and pick them up and make arrangements for that and so I'm kind of an exception to the case.
> Interviewer: What about the rest of the day? You have to make arrangements for the balance of the day.
> Mother: That's right and I don't still think it's as appropriate as having an all day program where they can do a number of things. [Son] attended one year of sport's camp in Whitby at Trofolger Castle and he really enjoyed that but then again, it's making arrangements in order for him to get there. It didn't start until nine o'clock and it was over at 4 and then my hours were 8:15 to 4:30 and, I did not have the flexibility

I have now, so we had to make arrangements for him to go. I was lucky. I had my full time baby sitter so we made arrangements for her to take him and pick him up.

The Bardots and the Kinseys at Lake School do not have this kind of flexibility in their jobs. The Bardots rely on their older son to look after their daughter; but the son is not as reliable in the summertime as during the school year and the mother worries during those times that the girl must stay by herself. The Harrisons at Lake School are very vocal about the need for a summer program.

Mother: I'd like to see something start probably ... and I know it's hard because there's a lot of people that are factory workers, they do start at 6:30 in the morning. I would like to see a program start like that you could drop your kids off at 6:30 -- they're going to do more than SIT in a room. They're going to get out into the sunshine and they're going to have activities. You know, like I say, [son] goes down here and gets to draw a couple days a week, which he loves. He loves to do art work. He enjoys it. They take him on hikes. But it's all through permission. They bring home a permission slip, like, "Can he come and can you help and ..." Which is good. All the girls are great down there with the kids.
Interviewer: This is the half-day summer thing?
Mother: And I would like to see something like that for a complete day, Monday through Friday. Because I see that kids have too much freedom -- they run around too much.

SUMMARY: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS AND HOLIDAYS. PRACTICES, STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

The child-care strategies used by both groups of parents during PD days and holidays can be summarized as follows:

1. Parents' child care strategies in the two schools do not differ substantially for PD days. Both make use of the extended family and women friends, sitter services, children's friends, having a parent stay at home either using vacation credits or banked time.

2. The way the families in the two school areas deal with school holidays is quite different. This is mainly a function of the parents'

occupations in Hill School (many are teachers and have the summer off) and the practice of sending children to all-day camps in the summer or hiring a teen-aged babysitter. More parents in the Hill School area make use of paid babysitters. This may be related to financial resources as well as the inability to count on the family for extended periods of time.

3. Most Lake School parents do not send their children to day camps because of lack of information or the difficulty of picking up the children at the appointed times. Cost is also a factor.

The Lake School's principal was asked for possible reasons why the parents interviewed do not make greater use of summer camps. She answered by saying that the school is in a community where there is a higher percentage of mothers who stay at home and that there is no great concern about "enrichment". When asked whether money may be a factor, she did not disagree but stated that it is more of a "mind set"; "lots of parents are very protective". Although statistics for the area only partly support her perception that more mothers are home, as we saw, her assumption about enrichment was not substantiated in our interviews. Yet a few mothers did state that some younger children do not feel comfortable about camps, particularly those where they must spend a couple of weeks away from home. It seems that they show much less resistance to going to a day camp or a community centre during the day, provided the parents could easily drop them in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon.

THE SCHOOLS: CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES

In our interviews, we asked about the kinds of contacts the schools made with the parents. We were interested in the ways in which schools tried, or did not try to accommodate the needs of families where both parents are employed. In other words, did the schools' relationship with the families contribute toward the scheduling mismatches or did they work to reduce them? The school practices we enquired about included phone calls to parents, their frequency, and type; parent interviews with teachers, information exchanged between the school and the parents; and homework.

HILL SCHOOL FAMILIES.

According to the Hill School principal, parents are called in case of emergency. He finds it is getting more and more difficult to get in touch with them because of work and answering devices and services. There is no written school policy about calls. Interviews with parents are mandatory only at the kindergarten level. Otherwise, as far as the children's "progress" is concerned, a call is made to parents and following that they are encouraged to phone for an appointment with the teacher.

At the end of the fall term, half a day is set aside for parent interviews. Interviews are usually scheduled during the day between 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 or 5:00 P.M.. Evenings or early morning appointments are arranged in exceptional cases depending on the nature of the problem and the situation of the parent: "the parents have to make the effort". So the school decides whether an out of hours appointment is warranted. If the interview is taking place for disciplinary reasons, the "school is more stringent".

Parents at Hill School seem to have enough flexibility at work to attend school interviews during the day. Some parents stated that the school was

fairly considerate of their privacy at work either by asking permission to call or by refraining from doing so except in case of an emergency. In such cases the school contacts the parent who is easiest to reach. Mrs. Gifford describes how she copes with the school's requirements.

> Interviewer: How about parents' interview days at the school?
> Mother: I'm trying to think. This year, I think I had, I think they had them up until four or five o'clock and we have had them later on in the afternoon which usually it's just myself that goes then. If there has been a particular problem that we've wanted to see the teacher then my husband has taken time off and we'll try and get one early in the morning so that we can make sure things are all right.

LAKE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

According to the school principal, parents are usually called for problems related to completing work. If the problem is serious, a call is made to set up an appointment. Also, if there are difficulties in the "yard", a call is made to let the parent know. First the school tries to reach the parent at home during the day. The principal stated that usually there is somebody at home. If it is necessary to call the work place, the parent who can be reached more easily is called. Evening calls are made as a last resort.

Parents can also call the school if the children are having problems. Regular contact is maintained with parents (calls are made every Thursday afternoon) of students who are having severe difficulties.

Parent-teacher interviews are normally conducted on three occasions. There is "Curriculum Night" in the fall, and then the regular report card interviews which take place in December and March. The school sends home a form to indicate the interview time and, if there is more than one teacher involved per family, the interviews are set up "back to back" to facilitate

visits. An interview is scheduled in the evening only exceptionally. Teachers prefer early morning (7 A.M.) rather than evening appointments. Usually there is a way of accommodating both teacher and parent but "more and more the school is inclined to treat them as dentist appointments", that is as appointments which are difficult to re-schedule.

When told that some parents found it an inconvenience to have to take children with them to the interviews (all the children are out of school on interview days) the principal said that older children could be at the interview, younger ones must stay out in the hall with a puzzle. It was suggested that parents could "share off" with a neighbour for babysitting. The interviewer pointed out that a number of project parents had stated that the neighbour they used to rely on for such purposes had found a job. The principal replied that her experience in this school is that there is always somebody at home in this area.

Parents from this school had a great deal more to say about its practices in terms of calls and interviews than the Hill School group. In some cases the parents' accounts seem to contradict each other, in other cases they concurred. For example, two families, the Calenskys and the Harrisons, agreed that the school will arrange the interviews at a time which is convenient for parents.

The Calensky interview:
Interviewer: How about Parents' Nights? Are the interviews convenient to you and let you know what...
Father: No, no they're not.
Mother: The ones they wanted were early in the morning...
Interviewer: And what did you do?
Mother: I just phoned and told them it was impossible. Any time after...
Interviewer: And what did they do? Did they rearrange to..
Mother: Ummhum. [assent]

The Harrison interview:

Interviewer: How about appointments -- Parent's Night at the school. Are they a convenient time for you to go?
Mother: They make them ... they'll call you and ask you.
Father: They have ... on a form they send home they have a set time for these interviews. But then if these times are not convenient to you, then you call them back and they will make other arrangements. They're good that way
Mother: I find that they're always good that way.

Mrs. Bardot explained that the school has not given her the option of going to the interviews in the evening but this does not make much difference because her job allows her to take time off during the day and make up for it later. It is perhaps for this reason that the school gives her no option.

Mrs. Harrison describes the impact that school phone calls can have on parents.

Mother: The phone rang for me one day and when I got to the phone the secretary said, "Hello, this is Miss ..." (so and so) -- she's always been on first name at Lake School. Well, my heart just stopped because it was just after lunch and I thought, "My God" -- always my biggest fear -- that something has happened to [son] at school. "[Son's] had a slight accident." Well I just [inaudible] And she said, "Oh God, I didn't mean to scare you." What had happened, he had to go to the washroom but he got so enthralled in what the teacher was doing that he wet his pants. But when she came up with, "[Son's] had an accident" -- it took me days to get over that.

The Holloways were not pleased with the frequency of calls in some instances and the lack of them in other instances.

Mother: I did find, prior to this job, when I was working in Toronto, one thing I didn't like about the school was because I was working in Toronto and it was a long distance line, they avoided calling me. They would call my girlfriend's number instead. Where, "Call me first. If you can't get hold of me at work, or I can't get there fast enough, then call". And a couple times I wasn't too pleased with that
We have the rule, too, that if they're being detained at school and we sort of had a bit of an argument with the school -- that if they're having a detention, that's fine with us but we want a phone call to know. Because we weren't getting them last year...

Mrs. Kinsey also complained about the frequency of calls. The calls were always addressed to her although she works out of town and is unable to go to the school. However, when the time comes for interviews, because the husband is home in the mornings, the school recognizes his presence as sufficient at the interviews. Thus, Mrs. Kinsey has yet to meet her son's teacher. This lack of consistency and co-ordination is a major cause of strain between the school and this family.

> Mother: My husband did go on the parent-teacher interviews. I was very upset that I wasn't able to ... that they weren't able to accommodate me. I would have liked to have gone. I have never met his teacher. I've talked to her. They didn't go out of their way, at all, to ... I said, "I can come in the evening and like, 7:00 or 7:30. Even a little earlier, if I have too" -- 'cause I'll just take that hour after work and come in -- you know leave earlier. And they said, "Well we don't like to encourage ... like we have certain hours and that's how we like to keep it". And I said, "What happens to people who are working?" That's fine if I was at home, then obviously I could go at their convenience. But when I'm at work -- I've never had this problem before, I've always been able to go to each one of the kid's schools because they've always had an evening -- they had at least one evening ...

Mrs. Miner who, as we saw, dislikes being called at work except in case of emergency because she has no privacy to talk on the phone (a problem common to many blue-collar workers), has a different kind of complaint to make about parent-teacher interviews.

> Interviewer: How about interviews -- parent interviews -- is the school good about scheduling those convenient to both of you?
> Father: Yeah, they're very flexible on them.
> Mother: I don't like interview week though because all three of my kids are in different schools... or having interviews on a PA days when all the kids are home. I realize that having interviews means having to have someone else teach the classroom but what are we supposed to do as parents? And I don't like taking the kids to those interviews. Because I don't feel when the kids are there that the teacher's being completely honest and neither are we.
> Interviewer: There isn't any place that the children can go while their parents are in the classroom?

Mother: Well, they kind of wander around the school, but they come in and they come out and it's not ... you know. I just don't like them being there. I would prefer them not to be there.

Finally, some parents, such as the Holts, complained of the short notice given by the school for scheduling parents' night.

Interviewer: Parent's Nights at the school and things. Are they convenient?
Mother: I haven't been to one because they always fall on the night I work. And I always get a letter home about three days before when the schedule's already made and I just can't. You know?

Mrs. Harrison also regretted that the school gives too short notice to parents who are working or stay at home with small children but still wish to participate in volunteer activities.

Interviewer: Do they ever ask you to participate in anything during the day?
Mother: Yeah, they have done. As a matter of fact on Friday, when [son] had this Jump-A-thon, a couple weeks prior -- could I participate on the Friday with the timing and things. And I wrote down, "Sure". And, "We will get back to you on Monday". Well, a week later and no one had called me. They phone me Thursday evening... Well, I was going out Friday afternoon. I had an appointment. I would have loved to have gone because [son] says, "When you work you never get to do anything with us" -- like class trips and things like that.
Father: Most of the notices that they send home for class trips and outside the school activities DURING school hours, there will be a post script on the bottom of this asking if you can participate. If they're going by car -- can you drive some kids. Or if they're walking -- if you can help them escort
Interviewer: So I guess you can do that if you KNEW it was your day off
Father: Yeah, but ... Our schedules -- by contract -- have to be up to 2 weeks in advance. But anything ahead of that, you know ... And then my days off during the week are either a Tuesday or a Wednesday. So if it's not on either one of those days ...
Mother: Yeah, I find that most of that stuff is done on, like, Fridays -- Mondays and [illegible]ys that's when most of the things in the school are done. Like I [illegible], "I'd be glad to help as long I know that you're not going to call me first thing in the morning". Like I say, I then have to have someone look after her and I do have to have someone take care of [daughter] while I'm gone.

Another problem that emerged in the interviews in this school related to the general flow of communication between school and home using the child as the intermediary. Some parents commented on the risks of relying entirely on the child to mediate between the home and the school. At best the child drags his or her feet, either because of shyness or forgetfulness; at worst, they censor the information they wish to convey to their parents, for example, by throwing out papers they do not like or are not interested in while promptly presenting the parents with the forms they like, e.g. Pizza lunches. One good example of this was Mrs. Kinsey's account of not being able to get information about summer activities from the school through her son because her son was too shy to ask. Although another parent stated that flyers had indeed been sent home, this parent never got them. There are other examples of these omissions, particularly in the area of homework as we will see later. The Harrisons describe the problem particularly well.

> Interviewer: But you don't get too many notes from ... [school]
> Mother: No, it's the first one I've ever gotten. First one in two years -- third year of school.
> Father: Usually what he does is he's got a little over-the-shoulder lunch bag -- nylon thing. And they give him papers and he usually stuffs them in the lunch bag. Well, if he feels like it, he happens to dump everything out when he comes home. And it was just the other day he brought something out in the room and it was a pledge sheet for this Jump-A-thon they were having at school. They were having it that day.
> Mother: Friday morning!
> Father: And he handed her the pledge sheet and said, "You're supposed to sign this". And she said, "No, [son], you were supposed to give me this a long time ago so you could get people to ..." Well, it was too late.

But sometimes even when the children deliver the information promptly, there can be problems, as the Miners report.

> Father: A wee little complaint that [mother] and I have about the children going to three different schools -- they bring literature about what's happening in the schools and nine times out of ten it doesn't even tell what school it is.

Mother: And the kids bring it home and throw it on the table. If this has got someone's name on it we can guess what school it is; if it's got what school we can guess who it belongs to.

HOMEWORK AND HOME INSTRUCTION

Another set of practices that straddles the domains of home and school is homework. Homework is not simply what children bring home to do from school; parents are often required to check it, supervise it, correct it. Where parents work outside the home, their involvement must be integrated into an already busy schedule. Homework often demands a fair amount of supervision and home instruction, particularly with students who are not very successful in school. Sometimes home instruction or parental help starts at the teacher's request; sometimes the parents take the initiative to correct some problems that they have diagnosed themselves (Griffith and Smith, 1990b).

In the same way, home instruction is not simply formal assistance with homework but includes other forms of activity, including play, that positively affect the child's progress and performance at school. Often this work is invisible and the child is credited individually for it; often, but not always, it relies on mother's work (Griffith and Smith, 1990b).

Working mothers, due to the double work load, have a particularly difficult time keeping up with this aspect of the home-school continuum. That is why the strain between school, home and job market must not only be seen in terms of gaps in scheduling and the attendant problems in child-care, but also in terms of the extra work that is required to contribute towards the children's school performance and achievement.

HILL SCHOOL FAMILIES.

At Hill School, according to the interviews, homework is assigned to children in the higher grades on a regular basis -- from about grade four upwards. Children in the lower grades also seem to get homework occasionally.

Parents in this school did not see homework as a problem but neither did they seem very involved in it except for those mothers who are teachers. Mrs. Schiller is a teacher and describes her children's homework activities as follows:

> Mother: And the other rule is after school, first thing they do is their homework.
> Interviewer: Are they pretty good about their homework? Do you feel that you're checking up on them? Do you usually ask them if they've got homework.
> Mother: Yeah. I'll ask them, "Do you have any homework" and they'll say, "Yeah, I've already done it". And I'll ask them if they have any problems. "No". I find it kind of touchy because I don't always want to be on their case because ...
> Interviewer: You're a teacher and you're a mother, yes
> Mother: But it seems that whenever they have a problem, they'll come to me and they'll say, "I don't get this math" or "How do you do this?" or "We've got to write a story. Do you want to edit it for me?" And I edit all their writing for them. Like the teacher knows that I do that. So it's ... I say "Keep your rough copy so that they can see that you did that and those were your ideas". I'm just checking spelling and a few grammar things.

Mrs. Mason's son did experience some problems but, as a teacher in the same school, not only was she able to easily diagnose and repair his problem with home instruction, she was also able to have considerable input into the decision to "double him up", more than a regular parent would. However, this advantage also carries a price, as she explains.

> But no, it's different being a teacher - I was a teacher there long before I was a parent there. Most of the friendships that I have are based on a teacher-teacher relationship and I keep it that way. I try not to get involved as a parent, but it is different, you know, you're sort of...I'm sure people are uncomfortable with me at times. It's only natural.

Mrs. Gibson's account of how the homework tasks are divided between her and her husband describes a strategy these parents' use to avoid having one parent much more involved than the other in the children's school work.

> Interviewer: Do they have homework?
> Mother: Yes, the two boys do all the time.
> Interviewer: Do you, do you help them with it, or does the dad help?
> Mother: I make sure that they're doing it and... I ask because I've been fooled before [chuckle]. My husband has more patience when it comes to stuff like that so I make sure that they're doing it and by then he's home so I get him to check it with them...so he's involved too.

LAKE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

The principal described the way that teachers at Lake School assigned homework. Some students who have difficulty completing work have a "home workbook"; or a "daily newsbook" in the case of younger children. The latter involves communication between the teacher and the parent and requires "a lot of dedication on the part of the parent."

More children in this school seem to be having problems coping with school and homework. Mrs. Kinsey describes particularly well the problem of the working mother who must fit the children's school work into an already full weekday or weekend.

> Mother: The first thing I ask when I come in the door is, "Do you have any homework?" And most of the time he says, "No". But I know he does because I get phone calls at work and letters that I find that aren't given to me. And so now I say, "I want to see ..." because I KNOW he does have homework. He's having difficulty with math. And the bad thing about this is that by the time he gets his homework done and has supper, you really can't keep him up long enough to really help him and that's the difficulty because ... I know they say that he should be practising every night on his time tables. But meantime he has two pages of math to do every night. So we have to go over that and corrections made on that and how do I fit in the time to help him with his time tables?

Mrs. Calensky also has the primary responsibility for helping her son with homework. The child is in the lower reading group at school.

> Father: The homework. [Son] has to do his homework. Pretty well every night he has homework.
> Interviewer: Does everybody in your class have homework?
> Son: Yes, except there's two different groups in reading. There's "Row Boats" and there's "Impressions" [names of readers]. The Impressions book is that big and their work is hard...
> Interviewer: Do you do your homework, do you do your homework on your own or do you have to...
> Son: Oh yeah, I do it on my own but my mom helps me sometimes.
> Mother: Whoo, whoo! Step back two steps.
> Son: Okay. She helps me...
> Mother: All the time.
> Son:...all the time.
> Mother: And Dad helps periodically.

The Miners attack the issue of home instruction from a different angle. Although all three children have learning disabilities and attend different schools, they think their homework should not be excessive so that they can help with housework.

> Interviewer: So what happens about the homework? Do you check their homework or they come to you for help. Or do you sort of ...
> Mother: Well, actually when it comes to homework, I think that's one area that we've sort of failed in because we don't ... there just doesn't seem to be enough hours in the day. Like if you get home at 3:00 in the afternoon and there's dinner to make and there's beds to make and the house to clean and vacuum. You know Bill pitches in and the kids do too. I don't like to see a lot of homework come home. I feel that they ... you know they come home from school and you have ... like there's things that have to be done here at home and everyone has to pitch in and help with those things

On the one hand, they admit that as parents they have "failed" in the area of homework; on the other hand they explain how they devised an unusual strategy to improve the lines of communication with their children. The parents take them to a special centre in Toronto once a month which they treat as a family outing. As well, when the family communication lines have gotten too

"stressed", Mrs. Miner will take one or two of the children out for the day to pay special attention to them.

The Holloways explain how the mother used to have the time to monitor the children's progress and do repair work before she re-entered the job market. Since then she and her husband share the task of keeping track of the children's work. As with child-care, the fact that Mr. Holloway works shifts allows him to give more assistance to his children because his hours are more compatible with the children's.

> Interviewer: So when they come home from school, do they have homework?
> Mother: Usually. [Daughter] always.
> Father: Well, she didn't tonight
> Mother: She didn't tonight -- usually she always does. [Second daughter]-- sometimes! [Daughter] had a lot last year only because she was behind in her grades and we were really pushing her to get her caught up. I was really pushing her. Last year I wasn't working so I was really ... we were really pushing her both at home and at school. And last year, I'll bet you, she was an hour -- two hours doing homework. Mind you it wouldn't have taken her that long but she [inaudible] It was getting her into the routine. "The sooner you get it done, the sooner ..."
> Interviewer: So who usually helps them with their homework?
> Mother: Well, [Father] has been doing that since I've started this job because he's usually home.

Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Bardot's interviews bring out a different aspect of the issue of homework. They point out the dangers of putting pressure on their boys about homework. The boys themselves refuse help and censor the information that they bring from school, or discourage parents from enquiring and helping with homework.

> Mrs. Harrison: And I said, "No, when the teacher sends you home things, you have to bring all your papers home so I know what's going on. And if you have something to do you have to let us know so that we can help you with it." "I don't need your help anyways. I'm not a baby." So that's his attitude. [chuckles] So we didn't know anything about it ...
>
> Mrs. Bardot: No, but like the first couple of years, or especially grade nine, we had a really rough time with him in school. We had an art's

> resource teacher that was phoning and saying that you know, she felt that he was...she thought he was hyper. Because he seemed very bored in school. She wanted me to have him tested, eh. But he said that he wasn't hyper, he was just bored. But this one teacher kept getting sort of on his back and he sort of put his back up and he was very resentful and so, anyways, we made him go for extra work and he didn't like it. Like he found he had so much...and then next year, she went after him again and then he said if you make me do extra work, I'll quit. So what we did was, we just let him on his own, and he did fine and he's done fine since.

Parents did not, in general, make recommendations about homework and curriculum because they were not directly asked about it. However, the Calenskys did contribute some useful information.

> Mother: I remember trying to enlist her into some type of a reading program through the summer and I never did hear back whether she got in or ... nobody had got hold of me on that. Things like that. I mean, I think they should have more information available for kids that are having trouble in school and where you can get help from. I've done a lot of running around to the school board and stuff for [daughter] because they felt that she was under her grade level and there was a problem. And I've had her to all kinds of doctors to have her assessed and ... I don't think that the school board gives you enough information. Like I know I've had to ask, "Would it be worth my while to hire a tutor". Or, "How do I go about hiring a tutor", "Where do I find a tutor?"

SUMMARY: CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES.

On the subject of telephone calls, parent-teacher interviews, homework and general flow of information between home and school, the following points should be noted:

1. In both schools, parents are required to attend interviews during the day unless the school decides that an out of hours appointment in warranted. The difference is that more Hill school parents seem to have the flexibility at work to comply with school rules.

2. More parents in Lake School seem to have a problem with the type, frequency and tone of phone calls they are getting from school as well as co-

ordinating calls with interviews and volunteer activities. This difficulty may hinge partly on the school's perception that there is always somebody at home when the school calls; or that a neighbour will take over child care when the parent needs to go to school.

3. Lake School parents also reported difficulties with the practice of using the child as an intermediary between school and home as well as with assisting with homework. More children in this school were experiencing problems with their academic standing and more parents were having difficulty assisting them.

The double work load is a major factor in preventing parents, particularly mothers, from giving the children home instruction in those cases where it is needed. Although some couples share in this task and exceptionally the father will take responsibility for this area, more often than not it falls on the mother to give the children the assistance they need.

However, it is also true that some children do refuse help and resent any intrusion from the parents to the point of intercepting information that comes from school. If the child is not doing well, this can prove to have disastrous consequences, as the Kinsey case attests, unless the channels of communication are kept open between home and school and the school shows flexibility in its dealings with households.

CONCLUSION

The "latchkey" phenomenon is a result of the discontinuity between the three domains -- home, school and work -- and the attendant pressures which it places on individual families. As we saw, most families in our sample had experienced some form of scheduling mismatches between school and work

although that was not the selection criterion for our study group (but rather that both parents work). If is true that the interviewers came across only one serious case of a distressed child left at home for long periods of time, most parents would agree with Mrs. Mason, a teacher, whose pupils often go home to an empty house.

> In many situations, from what I have found out, is that sometimes the time that they [children] are alone is not that long, maybe thirty or forty minutes, [but] it's the kind of time that's very hard to organize a sitter for and yet, even ten minutes is enough to make parents nervous.

The situation in the job market is such that it is very difficult for a couple to co-ordinate their working schedules in order to provide adequate supervision of school-aged children. It is only the large and established employers, like GM, who may offer some job flexibility when it comes to choice of shift work, "generous" holiday time and the possibility of banking hours. And even within such companies, the constraints put on blue-collar workers are still considerable compared to those of white collar workers. The latter, however, in particular those in management positions, require long hours of work which are largely incompatible with child care and a close knit family life. Work-sharing agreements are still rare, particularly formal ones. In most cases, families are forced to rely on the under-employment of mothers to solve scheduling strategies.

The strains between home and school hinge in great part on faulty communication channels and on the perception that mothers, their female friends, relatives and neighbours, are by and large still free from job markets constraints. But, as we saw, mobility and the need for a second income have turned this kind of help into a precious and rare commodity. Parents, particularly mothers, are expected to attend interviews and other types of

activities during the day, sometimes at short notice, as well as being expected to provide home instruction to their children because of the large size of the average classroom. At the same time that teachers are attempting to improve their status as professionals, and rightly so, for example, by attendance at monthly Professional Development days, they are also requiring more and more that parents adhere to working hours for interviews and other types of contacts between the school and the household. What seems to be happening, and our research confirms this trend, is that the school seeks to entrench its position as a separate institution, independently from the realities of the job market and the stresses it imposes on households, while continuing to depend on them to provide instruction and child-care that logically should be the responsibility of the school system as a public institution.

Therefore when we talk about perceptions and ideologies concerning the role of the family and the responsibility for child-care, no single school, its principal and teachers, is targeted. Rather, what we have been discussing so far is an ideological stance that permeates the school system (and the market place), albeit some school boards more than others. Mr. Graham, himself a teacher, has this to say about the ideological mismatch between school and home vis-a-vis the local school board.

> The days are long gone when one parent [was] working and one [was] at home and we had this lovely luxury when mothers would walk children to school in the morning and meet them at lunch time... But the people who sit on our school boards and make our decisions just don't seem to have got up to that. We've been fortunate to have a COUPLE of progressive people but we've really suffered out here at Durham from rapid growth. We've amalgamated several school boards together and we've got all dinosaurs from each of the systems. And they are all congregated at the top and only now are they starting to retire. Some of these people spend a dollar as if it's coming out of their own pocket. And we really notice it a lot because we read Toronto newspapers. We have people moving into

> our community from Toronto who are used to a lot of the programs available there and they've come out to this pre-historic area called Durham.

In the same way that one should not dismiss by the relatively small but insidious mismatches in scheduling between the three domains, home, school and work place, one should not be deceived either by the apparently few demands of parents in the more disadvantaged school area concerning before, after school and lunch programs.

When analyzing the parents' recommendations, one is of course struck by the fact that those parents who have more material resources, are more knowledgeable about the existing school programs and that have children attending them should be the ones who recommended that even more programs be offered in schools. But this should not surprise us in view of the fact that those parents, many of whom are teachers, are more aware of what can and should be available in the school setting. The other parents all too often have only a vague knowledge of both facilities and practices, a serious problem in itself. Moreover, they have not been accustomed to demanding that the school alleviate what society perceives as "individual" problems, in this case, that both parents "choose" to work in any given family. As we saw, parents in the Lake School area also felt some serious financial constraints that dictated some of the choices in the type of care and activity programs that they could provide for their children. In addition, they are more preoccupied, with good reason, with their children's academic standing and performance and how to improve it while coping with the demands of the double work day.

As mentioned before, a sizable percentage of teachers in our study group was an unintended effect of the selection process. But having had such

parents in our group proved beneficial in the end because it highlighted the contrast between informed and less informed parent. We hope that our research project will make a small contribution toward narrowing the knowledge gap between those parents, as well as alerting the schools and the school board to some of the constraints faced by all parents.

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